

# CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY



Walther and the Scriptures

ROBERT D. PREUS

Luther's Alleged Anti-Semitism

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The Hymn-of-the-Week Plan

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Book Review

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*Correction:* In the October issue on pages 579 and 664 ("Milestones in Walther's Life") Lewis W. Smith should be Lewis W. Spitz.

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# Walther and the Scriptures

By ROBERT D. PREUS

God's Word is our great heritage,  
And shall be ours forever;  
To spread its light from age to age  
Shall be our chief endeavor;  
Through life it guides our way,  
In death it is our stay;  
Lord, grant, while worlds endure,  
We keep its teachings pure  
Throughout all generations.

This stanza, written by the great Danish hymnist Grundtvig, can be traced back to Luther himself. It voices our attitude toward God's Word and offers clear direction and impulse for all our church work. Therefore it is fitting that we let this hymn introduce our topic and set the tone for our entire discussion.

God's Word is our great heritage, our Savior's bequest to us (John 17:17, 20). It is the distinction of Dr. C. F. W. Walther that by his preaching and teaching, by his counseling and example, he has kept the church aware of this great fact. In this anniversary year of his birth we do well to remind ourselves also of the precious legacy which God through this man has left us and to stimulate in our hearts gratitude to God for committing to us His Word, the Holy Scriptures.

There are four possible approaches to the subject "Walther and the Scriptures," each one legitimate, each yielding the same results and conclusions.

We might tackle the matter indirectly by studying Walther's approach to the Scriptures, the way he made use of them in public office and personal life. This would involve assessing his sermons, his personal correspondence, and total theo-

logical output. In this oblique manner we could actually come to a complete and fruitful understanding of Walther's position concerning Scripture.

We might repair to those writings in which Walther directly treats the Holy Scriptures. And ready at hand are articles from his pen, mostly in *Lehre und Wehre*, which deal with nearly every aspect of the article concerning the Holy Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

We might also survey all the theological literature of the Missouri Synod during Walther's day. Since he believed that full unity of doctrine should prevail in the

<sup>1</sup> *Lehre und Wehre* (hereafter abbreviated as *LuW*), 2 (Jan. 1856), 1 ff. "Vorwort zu Jahrgang 1856" *LuW*, 17 (Aug. 1871), 255 ff. "Was lehrt Joh. Gerhard von der heiligen Schrift, insonderheit von der Inspiration der heiligen Schrift?" *LuW*, 13 (April 1867), 97 ff. "Vier Thesen ueber das Schriftprinzip," *LuW*, 4 (Aug. 1858), 225 ff. "Unterricht wider den Zweifel am goettlichen Wort und dessen Wahrheit," *LuW*, 21 (Sept. 1875), 255 ff. "Was ist es um Fortschritt der modernen lutherischen Theologie in der Lehre?" *LuW*, 28 (Jan. 1882), 1 ff. "Vorwort zu Jahrgang 1882," *LuW*, 32 (Jan. 1886), 1 ff. "Vorwort zu Jahrgang 1886," *LuW*, 17 (Feb. 1871), 33 ff. "Was lehren die neueren orthodox sein wollenden Theologen von der Inspiration?" This article, unsigned in the *LuW*, was ascribed to Walther when it appeared as a booklet printed in Dresden in 1871. Some have questioned Walther's authorship of this article and booklet (cf. *CTM*, XXXII [July 1961], 421). There is no evidence that Walther disavowed the article. Since he was the editor of *LuW*, we may assume that the position taken here had his full endorsement. In quoting from this article we shall therefore make him responsible for its statements. *CTM*, X (April 1939), 254 ff. "The False Arguments for the Modern Theory of Open Questions," trans. W. Arndt and A. Guebert, *Siebzehnter Synodal-Bericht des Westlichen Distrikts* (St. Louis, 1873).

church and since he was the dominant theological figure in our church during its first half century, Walther's spirit and theology will be reflected in the literature of the Missouri Synod, particularly in *Der Lutheraner* and *Lehre und Wehre*, which he edited over the years. Moreover, in this connection we would study the older theological literature which was recommended and cherished by Walther, especially Luther, our Lutheran Confessions, and the great Lutheran dogmatists. Walther made no bones about being what was contemptuously termed a "restitution theologian" or a "citation theologian" and never tired of quoting the old orthodox Lutheran dogmatists.<sup>2</sup> Therefore it is quite proper and important to recognize that his enlarged and, one might add, greatly improved edition of Baier's *Compendium* will definitely represent Walther's theology, also on the article concerning the Holy Scriptures.

We might furthermore learn Walther's position concerning Scripture from his students, from many men who considered themselves his theological progenies, e.g., Pieper, Engelder, Eling Hove of the old Norwegian Synod, all of whom wrote extensively on the subject of the Bible. Pieper, who was chosen by the church to teach dogmatics at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis and who, while Walther was still his colleague, taught and wrote much on the subject of Scripture, will surely be portraying Walther's views in his utterances.

In presenting Walther's doctrine of Scripture I will employ all the approaches mentioned above, but in the main the sec-

ond, the direct approach, which will yield the most immediate results.

In regard to the Scriptures there were three issues which Walther considered primary in his day and which are still alive and important today. We will therefore consider Walther's position regarding

I. The Inspiration of Scripture

II. The Authority of Scripture

III. The Inerrancy of Scripture

#### I. THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

The divine origin of Scripture, always a vital matter for the church, was to Walther one of the most burning questions of his day. The reason for this concern was a practical one. Too many trusting Christians were being led by pastors who no longer believed the Scriptures, and the poor people were often unaware of their situation. Therefore Walther issues a warning against any and all scholars who would shake our confidence in the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Beware, he says, of those who oppose their human science to God's revelation and who thereby make theology a science, a matter of the church's self-consciousness, rather than a gift of God.<sup>3</sup> From the beginning the theological magazine *Lehre und Wehre* stood for the divine inspiration of Scripture. With growing intensity it continued to defend this cardinal teaching against all falsifications. Its purpose was to protect Christian lay people from being taught to build their faith on the sands of human opinion and thereby to lose their faith, God's grace, and their own souls.

What does Walther mean by the inspiration of Scripture? Again and again he cites

<sup>2</sup> *LW*, 21 (Jan. 1875), 1 ff. *LW*, 23 (May 1877), 129 ff. See "Walther's Letter from Zurich" in the previous issue of this journal.

<sup>3</sup> *LW*, 32 (Jan. 1886), 6 ff.

the definitions of old orthodox Lutheran theologians and therewith seems content to rest his case. John Andrew Quenstedt is a particular favorite of his. He quotes with approval one of Quenstedt's strongest statements concerning the direct divine origin of everything in the Bible: "All those things which were to be written in the Scriptures were communicated by the Holy Spirit to the holy writers when they wrote and were dictated to their understanding as one would dictate to a penman. Such things were written under these and under no other circumstances, in this manner and arrangement and in no other."<sup>4</sup> Walther identifies himself squarely with this position. To him "the entire holy Scripture is a work of the Holy Spirit." With Luther he confesses, "Every letter, yes, every single tittle of Scripture, is of more and greater importance than heaven and earth."<sup>5</sup>

The opinion was quite prevalent in Walther's day that the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture was not a part of the Reformation faith, that this rigid position was worked out only in the 17th century. The reformers, it was maintained, only taught that somehow Scripture contained the Word of God.<sup>6</sup> Walther goes to great length to prove that the celebrated theologians of the 17th century, John Gerhard, Abraham Calov, John Quenstedt, were only following the belief of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. From the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (Art. IV, 108)

<sup>4</sup> *LuW*, 21 (Sept. 1875), 257. Cf. Quenstedt, *Systema*, 1715 ed., I, 98.

<sup>5</sup> *LuW*, 32 (March 1886), 66.

<sup>6</sup> *Siebzehnter Synodal-Bericht des Westlichen Distrikts*, 1873. "Dass nur durch die Lehre der lutherischen Kirche Gott allein alle Ehre gegeben werde," pp. 26 ff.

he quotes Melancthon's insistence that the words of Scripture "did not fall from the Holy Spirit unawares." From these words Walther infers,

the Holy Spirit has inspired the Scriptures and placed everything there deliberately. Here our church confesses that every word, every arrangement of words, every reiteration of words, every summation, the entire way and manner of speaking [of Scripture] has its origin in the Holy Spirit. He has inspired everything, not just the basic truths, not just the sense and meaning, not just the "what" but also the "how." And it was He who has chosen the words which were necessary to reveal correctly to us God's meaning.

And, says Walther,

That this is the teaching of Holy Scripture itself every Christian knows. The Savior Himself says to the apostles: the Holy Spirit will give you "how" and "what" you are to preach (Matt. 10:19, 20). Also the apostle speaks "in words which the Holy Ghost teaches" (1 Cor. 2:13). And without exception the prophets, when they begin writing, say, "Thus saith the Lord." When the New Testament cites the Old it says, "As the Holy Spirit says" (Mark 12:36; Acts 1:16; 28:25). And the apostle Paul testifies that all Scripture is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). As the holy men wrote Scripture, the Holy Spirit inspired it.

And so Walther concludes,

It is not Isaiah, not Moses, not Paul, who speaks in Scripture, but the Holy Spirit. With men it may happen that once in a while an expression falls which is not entirely correct, but this does not happen with the Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup>

Most of Walther's writing concerning the divine origin of Scripture was polemical.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

cal. He felt constrained to expose and condemn the manifold assaults leveled against Scripture by the positive theologians of his day, the "neo-orthodox," as he called them.<sup>8</sup>

### *Scripture Itself Inspired*

One of the most prominent errors of the 19th century concerning Scripture was the emphasis on the inspiration of the writers to the exclusion of the inspiration of the Bible itself. The writers of Scripture were inspired, not Scripture itself. Often this inspiration was considered to be no more than a divine guidance. It was merely the poetical imagination of the apostle or prophet. The prophets were stimulated, agitated, pushed by God, similar to the manner in which a person might be stimulated by wine. This was the position of Schleiermacher, Twisten, Thomasius, and others. To Thomasius inspiration was merely regenerate enlightenment.

Walther counters that this position does not take into account that Scripture itself is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16). The question is never answered by these theologians whether this "thrust" of the Holy Spirit upon the writers provides the Scriptures with inerrancy and infallibility.

Furthermore, the theory of person inspiration at best lets the Bible be only partially inspired. This conclusion was clearly reached by the theologian Twisten.<sup>9</sup> In-

<sup>8</sup> Most of Walther's comments on modern theology and its doctrine of inspiration may be found in the little book, *Was lehren die neueren orthodox sein wollenden Theologen von der Inspiration?* (Dresden, 1871). Cf. also *LuW*, 32 (Jan. 1886), 1 ff.

<sup>9</sup> *Vorlesungen über die Dogmatik der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Hamburg, 1834), I, 404.

spiration pertains to the words of Scripture only as their use comes into relation with our inner life, he said. The history recorded in Scripture is inspired only as it touches the Christian consciousness. Hence there is no unconditional infallibility in Scripture. In matters of faith and life there are no errors, but in chronology, geography, and other minor matters Scripture may be wrong. God is the Truth, and what comes from Him is truth. But not all Scripture is inspired in the same way.

The far-reaching implications of this exclusive emphasis on person inspiration are clear. The Bible is no longer, strictly speaking, God's Word. And Walther was quick to point out this inference.

Another German theologian who seemed to teach merely an inspiration of persons was the eminent and in many ways conservative Franz Delitzsch. In describing the Psalms he contended that these were merely reports of God's history of salvation (*Heilsgeschichte*) which made their way as songs into the congregation.<sup>10</sup> Walther complains that this is certainly not saying enough about the Psalms. There is not a word in Delitzsch about the Psalms not being human thinking but God's revelation. How are these Psalms inspired? Walther asks. And in what way are they different from the beautiful hymns of Luther and Gerhardt? Are not also these hymns reports of God's history of salvation (*heilsgeschichtlicher Beruf*)? Delitzsch is talking about what the Psalms contain and what position they had in the Israelitish church. But he says nothing about what they are. But finally Delitzsch does say what they are. They are not God's

<sup>10</sup> *Commentar über den Psalter* (Leipzig, 1859), I, xvi; II, 234.

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Word, as every child knows; no, "they are songs from the human heart." "What an unheard of disclosure!!!!" Walther exclaims. Surely the hymns of Luther and Gerhardt are songs from human hearts. Delitzsch adds that "in these songs the heart of God is at the same time reflected in the thankfulness for future redemption." But this is utterly vague, says Walther. What reflects the heart of God? Is it the human heart or the human song? Again we could say the same for Luther or Gerhardt. It is clear that Walther's real criticism of Delitzsch is not that he stresses person inspiration but that he never admits that there is something unique about the Bible, that it is different from all other writing in that it is the Word of God.

Walther also criticizes the subjectivity of the view that inspiration was mere divine enlightenment, an ecstasy, a conviction in the life of the apostle. Hence it would follow that everything in Scripture should be tested by the power of our religious nature. This, says Walther, is enthusiasm pure and simple.

### *The Human Side*

Closely related to the aberration just mentioned was the rather common allegation that the human side of Scripture must be in no way suppressed. Just as today, theologians were then talking about a divine-human Scripture. The human side consisted in this, that Scripture reflects the ideas, the love, the pain, the joy, the grief, the peace of mind, of its human authors. In this sense the Scriptures are thoroughly human, revealing the fears, the joys, the passions, laying bare the souls of their authors. All this is undeniable and clear from Scripture itself. The divine side of

Scripture consists in this, that this book, written in human language and style, is God's Word, expresses God's thoughts, God's message to man. This is the affirmation of Christ and all the apostles. In Walther's day this latter fact was played down or even denied by many theologians.

It was said quite commonly in those days that the old orthodox doctrine of verbal inspiration was Montanistic and Monophysite in depreciating the true human side of the Bible. Lange<sup>11</sup> asserted that to preserve this human side of Scripture we can only say that somehow the Word of God is *in* the human words of Scripture, somehow the divine Word is *with* the human word, but this does not imply the *perfection* of the human element. Walther said that such a theory makes the human side of Scripture the chief thing.

Even stronger opposition to the old doctrine of inspiration was registered by Luthardt.<sup>12</sup> He insisted that the modern exegesis and criticism of the day had demolished the dogma of inspiration. Rather smugly he stated (today, almost 100 years later, W. Elert says the same thing<sup>13</sup>) that no reputable theologian could any longer adhere to the inspiration of the Scriptures. Luthardt's reasoning has a remarkably modern ring to it, reminding us of Barth and neo-orthodoxy today. Scripture is a human book, he says, just as the church consists of humans. But the

<sup>11</sup> *Die Hauptstellen bei Schwarz: Zur Geschichte der Neuesten Theologie* (Leipzig, 1864), p. 346.

<sup>12</sup> *Compendium der Dogmatik* (Leipzig, 1866), p. 237.

<sup>13</sup> *Der Christliche Glaube* (Hamburg, 1956), pp. 169 ff.



Spirit of God dwells and makes His influence felt in Scripture even with all its errors, just as He does in the empirical church with her sins and weaknesses. One must not stop with Scripture, Luthardt maintained, but go on to find God's Word and revelation.

Walther was by no means cowed either by these assertions or by the fact that few in Europe any longer shared his convictions concerning a divinely inspired Bible. The divine-human Scripture which Luthardt upholds means really only a human Scripture, and to Walther such a position is intolerable. Listen to what he says:

Beware, beware, I say, of this "divine-human Scripture." It is the devil's mask. For eventually it constructs such a Bible after which I would not wish to call myself a Bible Christian. Henceforth the Bible is nothing more than any other good book which I must read with constant and diligent examination lest I be counseled in error. For if I believe that the Bible also contains errors, then it is no longer a touchstone for me, but needs a touchstone itself. In short, it is unspeakable what the devil tries with the "divine-human Scripture."<sup>14</sup>

#### *Not Merely a Record of Revelation*

A third aberration which Walther attacked was the doctrine that the Holy Scriptures were not God's revelation but only a record of His revelation. This view was a denial of Scripture as God's Word, so far as Walther was concerned. It was a very popular view on the European continent, although it assumed various forms.

<sup>14</sup> *LW*, 32 (March 1886), 76. Walther here imitates Luther's blast against the alloecsis of Zwingli. Cf. *FC SD VIII* 40; *St. Louis ed.* XX 943; *WA* 26, 319.

Karl Hase<sup>15</sup> taught that the original revelation was in the spirit of man, and Scripture was merely a record (*Bericht*) of this. Nietzsche<sup>16</sup> held that Scripture was only the original attestation to God's revelation (*Offenbarungsurkunde*), and only in this sense could it be called the Word of God. Moreover, anything in the Bible, such as astronomy, physics, geography, which does not touch the way of salvation, is not a part of God's revelation.

Walther feels that there is dishonesty in this view when it calls Scripture God's Word. If Plutarch wrote of the accomplishments of Sulla, surely no one would presume to call Plutarch's account the word of Sulla.

Luthardt taught a slightly different modification of the same view. To him revelation was history, and Scripture tells this history. He says,

The source of our faith is God's revelation. But Scripture is not revelation itself, but only a report (*Bericht*) concerning revelation. Revelation is a history. Scripture tells us this history. We must cull the revelation from the Scripture report.<sup>17</sup>

Walther's reply to Luthardt is very bitter, but we can understand his concern.

"The Bible is not God's Word but a record of God's revelation." This is certainly a forceful distinction. For if it is God's Word, then we must believe it, and believe it blindly and without reservation. And we must believe it even if 10,000 professors — together with all those who ape them — teach the opposite. However,

<sup>15</sup> *Evangelische Dogmatik* (Leipzig, 1842), pp. 408 ff.

<sup>16</sup> *Akademische Vorträge über die christliche Glaubenslehre* (Berlin, 1858), pp. 57, 58.

<sup>17</sup> *Zeitschrift für Protestantismus und Kirche*. 43 (1862), 176.



if it is not God's Word but only a human report, a record of revelation, then we must test it.

No, once one concedes that the Bible is not the Word of God but only a gathering of human reports in which here and there lies hidden a nugget of God's Word, then the gate and door is opened to the wild boar who destroys God's vineyard.

And what is the basis of Luthardt's theory? Facts, he says. But they are not facts at all but pure hypotheses and bombast.

The view which Walther attacked with such vehemence was a popular one. Essentially it was the same as that articulated by Kahnis.<sup>18</sup> Kahnis felt that the doctrine of verbal inspiration meant a hardening against the truth. God could not truly be called the Author of Scripture, he asserted. Then, says Walther, Jesus hardened Himself against the truth when He speaks of the words of Scripture as proceeding from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). But what is this truth which Kahnis speaks of? It is a fraudulent claim born in hell and a fabrication of the devil. Kahnis said that the old doctrine of inspiration absorbs revelation. Revelation must be considered as prior to Scripture; Scripture is only a record (*Urkunde*) of revelation. Such a view, says Walther, which regards Scripture as neither God's Word nor revelation but only a "house of Jewish writings" would make it impossible for one even to begin the work of dogmatics.

Two questions might be asked at this point. First, does Walther, when he discusses the origin of Scripture, have anything to say to us in 1961? Or is he simply out of date? We must answer that

if Walther has been faithful to the Holy Scriptures, to their testimony concerning themselves and concerning Christ, he will always be contemporary. Furthermore, it is quite clear from the observations we have made above (and will become clearer as we proceed) that Walther did not live in a vacuum or in a precritical age. And he was quick to grapple with contemporary issues. Work was being done in those days to undermine the Scriptures and their testimony concerning themselves.

The second question is this: Why does Walther use such bitter invective against his adversaries? We hesitate to use such language today. The reason is not just that people spoke more harshly in those days. No, Walther's severe language reveals deep and pious concerns. What are these concerns?

With Walther it was of supreme importance that all glory must be given to God in all our lives and activities. This is the essence of God's commands and of true worship. And this requirement is met fully only when we adhere to pure doctrine, and this involves holding to the divine authorship of Scripture. No one who sets himself above God's Word is giving all glory to God.<sup>19</sup>

A second reason for Walther's strong language and concern in the matter of inspiration was that he saw clearly the fatal consequences of a denial of the inspiration of Scripture. Almost invariably such a denial will influence a theologian's attitude also toward the properties of Scripture. In Walther's day Vilmar

<sup>18</sup> *Der innere Gang des deutschen Protestantismus* (Leipzig, 1860), p. 241.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Siebzebenter Synodal-Bericht des Westlichen Distrikts*, 1873. "Dass nur durch die Lehre der lutherischen Kirche Gott allein alle Ehre gegeben werde," pp. 26 ff.

questioned the essential clarity of Scripture; von Hofmann undermined the authority of Scripture, averring that one could not quote individual Scripture passages as having the authority of Very God. Together with Kahnis and Luthardt these theologians and others had abandoned the doctrine of Scripture's inerrancy. All this because they no longer believed that Scripture was God's Word.<sup>20</sup> And von Hofmann's rejection of direct predictive prophecy and of the atonement can also be traced to his low view of Scripture.<sup>21</sup>

Walther maintains that the theologian's whole attitude toward Christian doctrine is affected when he places himself above the Scriptures.<sup>22</sup> In such an event doctrine is no longer drawn from the Scriptures, but from the "Christian consciousness" (Luthardt) or the "consciousness of the church" (Kahnis). Harless went so far as to assert that the power of the theologian lies in his own rational spirit, in his own capacities. This claim is simply placing reason above Scripture.

Another tragic result accruing from disbelief in the divine origin of Scripture is the tendency to make the church's symbols or the consensus of the church the source of doctrine. Thus the church is placed above rather than under the Scriptures. This inversion, says Walther, is the "first lie" of modern Protestantism, the daughter of rationalism wearing a Christian garb, the sister of Romanism with a Protestant mask. But it is the logical result when one sets aside the inspiration of Scripture.<sup>23</sup>

The third and most important reason for Walther's firm stand on the divine origin of Scripture is purely practical. He desires poor sinners through patience and comfort of the Scriptures to have hope. But there can be no comfort, no certainty, in the church when theologians have forsaken the doctrine that Scripture is God's revelation. The liberal attitude of his day therefore filled Walther with a deep sadness. When Thomasius<sup>24</sup> argued that we can no longer use the words "dictation," "hands," "penmen," and apply them to the human authors of Scripture, Walther could only reply,

With his scientific denial that the Holy Spirit has dictated the Scriptures Thomasius has in fact destroyed the whole Christian religion. For where am I to find my God if not in His Word? Shall I dream Him up like the Anabaptists? Or shall I turn myself over to Pope Pius IX as my vice-regent? No? But if I cannot catch my God in the Vatican or in my dreams and if He does not come to me as He did to Abraham on the fields of Mamre—where in all the world am I to find Him? Is a Lutheran to seek Him at all? Yes, it is said, in His Word. But what if this Word [of Scripture] is not literally, not truly, God's Word? What if it is only a human word which was caused by some sort of activity of the Spirit? Then I cannot find my God. Then I have no God. For what good does it do me that the Biblical writers tell me *about* Him? I want to have Him myself. I want to hear from His lips, Thy sins be forgiven thee. Be of good cheer. There was once a child who lost his father on the way from New York to the West. With great sorrow he sought him. Then

<sup>20</sup> *LuW*, 21 (Nov. 1875), 326 ff.

<sup>21</sup> *LuW*, 17 (March 1871), 72.

<sup>22</sup> *LuW*, 21 (June 1875), 161 ff.

<sup>23</sup> *LuW*, 21 (Dec. 1875), 374 ff.

<sup>24</sup> *Christi Person und Werk* (Erlangen, 1862), III, I, 449.

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he met some fine, pious people who told him about his father. One had seen him in Buffalo, another somewhere else. But as much as the poor child traveled here and there, he never found his father. It was said that he finally drowned in one of the Great Lakes. And indeed, if these theologians proceeded in such a way they would drown innumerable souls. For the souls of sinners are not satisfied with a report which tells them *about* their Father. They thirst after God, after the living God. And since they cannot get this peace from their own lips, they go under.<sup>25</sup>

## II. THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

Walther believed that the Missouri Synod, and he as the chosen leader of this church body, had a mission. The spirit of his day was the spirit of skepticism, a Pilatelike spirit, which asks sneeringly, "What is truth?" Opinions and theories are popular; the claim to have any final truth is seldom made, particularly in matters theological where religions and parties within religions cannot come to any agreement.

But it is Walther's cry that there is theological truth, and this truth is worth fighting for, even though the world call it "foolishness." "Out of divine conviction," he says,<sup>26</sup> "we believe that there is such a thing as truth, and this truth is God's Word. That is to say, it is contained in the inspired Scriptures of the apostles and prophets." Again he says,

The truth is not a Tower of Babel upon whose structure we must labor till the last

day. But we believe it is a heavenly building long since completed, completed by the hands of the apostles and prophets.

The words of our Savior Himself prompted Walther to make these strong claims. Jesus said, "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31, 32)

Walther's mission and the mission of our church was to bring the truth of God to people sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. This was his platform for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Walther believed that this platform could be carried out, that people could be shown the truth based on the foundations of Scripture. He had confidence in the power and divine authority of the Sacred Scriptures.

Precisely what was the authority of Scripture to Walther? Here again we find him following the older theologians of the Lutheran Church very closely. He draws primarily from Luther, our Confessions, John Gerhard, and John Quenstedt.<sup>27</sup>

### *The Scripture Principle*

Walther speaks of the Scripture principle, or formal principle, of theology, in contrast to the so-called material principle, the doctrine of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith. The word "principle" means foundation. God's justification is the foundation of our salvation; God's Scriptures are the foundation of our theology, our language about God, our doctrine.

The Scripture principle involves two

<sup>25</sup> *Was lehren die neueren orthodox sein wollenden Theologen von der Inspiration?* p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> "Vorwort zu Jahrgang 1856," *LW*, 2 (Jan. 1856), 2 ff.

<sup>27</sup> For what follows see *LW*, 13 (April 1867), 97 ff.

things, according to Walther. 1. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the one source of religion and all our theological knowledge. In Scripture alone are the passages or truths (*Wahrheiten*) from which theological conclusions can be made. Our theology is Christian therefore only insofar as it is drawn from Scripture. 2. Scripture is the only rule and norm by which all teachers and teachings are to be judged — not experience, not the consensus of the church, not reason, not the assured results of modern scholarship.

Every discipline, Walther points out, has its first principles, whether mathematics, or physics, or ethics. For instance, in ethics it is a principle that we should love good and hate evil.<sup>28</sup> So it is also in theology. Here we follow the old theological axiom: "Whatever is revealed by God in these written words [of Scripture] is incontrovertibly true and worthy of faith." The Scriptures have every characteristic of a proper source or principle of theology. They are the primary witness we have of God, they come directly from Him, they are self-authenticating and unassailable.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, it is the claim of the Scriptures themselves that they are the only source and authority for theology in the church (cf. Deut. 4:2; Josh. 23:6; Is. 8:20; Luke 16:29; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). In all their teaching and preaching Christ and the apostles make Scripture the source of all their doctrine.

Walther was careful to insist that not

<sup>28</sup> Cf. D. Hollaz, *Examen theologicum acroamaticum*, 1750 ed., p. 61.

<sup>29</sup> Walther is drawing from Aristotle [Anal. Post. I, 2, 72a, 19-36], who uses the terms *πρῶτον, ἄμεσον, ἀναπόδεικτον, αὐτόπιστον, ἀντιτύπον, ἀναντίρρητον*.

only the express words of Scripture are binding and authoritative but also a conclusion drawn from Scripture. What Scripture says by inference (*implicite*, κατὰ διάνοιαν) we are obliged to believe and follow. This axiom is clearly demonstrated by the example of Christ who validly infers the doctrine of the resurrection from the words of Scripture: "I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3:6; Matt. 22:32). Walther is not merely attacking Sadducean literalistic interpretation at this point, but is asserting that doctrine drawn legitimately from Scripture must be considered true and binding. As mentioned above, there were too many of Walther's contemporaries who did not believe in the possibility of true doctrine in the church.

#### *Other Norms Ruled Out*

The Scripture principle, according to Walther, rules out every other criterion or norm of doctrine. This was a rather constant refrain which one may tire of hearing, but in every age there are those who would draw their teaching from the wrong sources. Against those who would make reason, even regenerate reason, a judge in theological matters Walther quotes:

1 Cor. 1:21: For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

1 Cor. 2:4, 5: And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

1 Cor. 2:14: But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God:

for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Col. 2:8: Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Against tradition as a source of theology Walther cites Christ's tirade against the Pharisees in Matt. 15. No doubt he has in mind such statements as Matt. 15:9: "But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." In rejecting tradition as a source of theology Walther includes the so-called consensus of the early church and the fathers (Calixt) and also the articles of our faith which are not a source of theology but are derived from the source of theology, viz., Scripture. Private revelations must also be refused as a source of theology, Walther asserts. Christ tells the church to teach those things which He has commanded (Matt. 28:19, 20). The church and her theology is built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles (Eph. 2:20), not on all sorts of private revelations.

#### *Corollaries*

When we profess that the canonical Scriptures are the one source of theology, we are at the same time affirming several other things about these holy writings. We are declaring that these writings are God's Word, breathed from His mouth in both content and form. We are declaring that these Scriptures are perfect, or sufficient, that is to say, they contain everything a poor sinner needs to know for salvation. We are declaring finally that the Sacred Scriptures are clear, and clarity means that everything necessary to be

known for salvation and a godly life is revealed in Scripture in such a manner that an attentive reader of sound mind and some skill in language can understand it. It is important to note how Walther links all these ideas. The divine origin of Scripture, its power and authority, its perfection and perspicuity — these things all hang together. Scripture itself does not closely distinguish between these various properties which it possesses. Hence if one aspect of the doctrine of Scripture is undermined, the entire doctrine is often overthrown. Such has been the case, Walther observes, among those theologians who teach that only the content (not the words of Scripture) are God-breathed or who teach degrees of inspiration. Such opinions invariably shake the very authority of the Scriptures.

#### *Sufficiency*

The authority of Scripture becomes fully meaningful to us only when we learn to appreciate how practical this Word of God is, when we see that it has been written to help and direct us in every aspect of our Christian life. This practical purpose of Scripture our old Lutheran theologians have called its sufficiency. Scripture fits us, equips us, sufficiently and perfectly for our Christian sojourn. It provides wisdom and guidance, strength and comfort in every issue of life. As St. Paul says, "It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). But the purpose of Scripture also is to bring us to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. (John 20:31; 5:46, 47; Heb. 1:2)

### Clarity

Like Luther, Walther is vitally concerned to maintain the clarity of Scripture. And his interest in this matter is by no means academic. The authority and clarity of the Scriptures go hand in hand. When the perspicuity of Scripture is questioned, the authority of Scripture is ultimately undermined. For then the church must enter in to interpret these allegedly dark and obscure writings to the common people, or else higher scholarship and scientific exegesis must be consulted before the common Christian can be sure of Scripture's meaning. Thus the church or the interpreter become the authority. Walther is wary of anyone who would make the Bible a vague or ambiguous book.

Walther believes in the clarity of Scripture because of the testimony of Scripture itself. Scripture is called a lamp and a light which shines; it is called true (Ps. 119:105, 130; 19:9; Prov. 6:23; 2 Peter 1:19). Of course, there are difficult passages in Scripture, but Walther denies that any of these passages run counter to the analogy of faith. By the analogy of faith Walther seems to mean the clear passages of Scripture, or what we would term proof passages. In other words, our best recourse when we encounter difficulties in reading Scripture is to interpret puzzling and obscure passages by the clear ones which speak of the same subject. And Walther has confidence in this method. He concurs with St. Augustine, who said (*De doctrina Christiana* II, 6): "The Holy Spirit has not set forth anything obscurely which is not found to be stated very clearly somewhere else in Scripture."

It must also be admitted that there is

darkness and obscurity when the unregenerate man sets about to interpret the Scriptures. But the darkness is in him, not in the divine Word. In fact, such a person cannot grasp any of the saving doctrine of Scripture unless the Spirit of God enlightens him through the Word. Without such enlightenment everything is foolishness to him (Jer. 8:8, 9; 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:3, 4). It is of course true that the unregenerate man can understand the words of Scripture in their grammatical order and sense, but not the intended meaning of the Holy Spirit — not without the enlightenment of the Spirit. With Luther Walther holds to a double clarity and obscurity. Outwardly there is nothing obscure or doubtful, but everything is set forth clearly in Scripture. But inwardly not a tittle of Scripture is understood by anyone who does not have the Spirit of God. When Walther speaks so often of our dependence upon the Holy Spirit for our interpreting and believing the Scriptures, he is emphasizing a truth which is often forgotten in our day of serene confidence in man's mind, man's objectivity, man's insights, man's scholarship. We too need always to pray for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit when we read and study the Sacred Scriptures.

Walther was fully convinced that outside the church, people would regard the Bible as ambiguous and unclear. What disturbed him greatly was that in the church, even the Lutheran Church, so many would dispute the lucidity of Scripture. At best such people do not believe in the divine origin of the Bible; at worst they do not believe in God at all.

Who of us [he says] will deny that God, the Creator of human speech, is able



to speak clearly? Who will deny that God, the eternal Truth, Wisdom, and Love, intended to speak clearly? Who will deny that God actually did speak clearly, yea, was obligated to speak clearly, in that Scripture which He inspired for just one purpose — to tell man what he must know in order to be saved? . . .

Even though a person has no knowledge of, or only an imperfect knowledge of, historical data and related facts, yet he is able to find and walk the way of salvation under all circumstances without any hindrance.<sup>30</sup>

To Walther, then, it was a simple denial of God's universal grace to imply that Scripture does not clearly teach all the articles of our Christian faith. He quotes Luther:

No book on earth is so clear as the Holy Scriptures. It excels every other book just as the sun excels every other light. . . . It is a shocking disgrace, blasphemy against the Holy Scriptures and all Christendom, to say that the Holy Scriptures are obscure and not clear enough to enable everyone to understand and then to teach and prove what he believes.<sup>31</sup>

Why is it that many in the church regard Scripture as vague and unclear? Because they do not *search*, Walther replies (John 5:39). Because they are half asleep or their minds are 1,000 miles away when they read. One must read Scripture attentively and with a proper submissive spirit. "Is it not shocking," he asks, "when people ascribe to the alleged obscurity and ambiguity of the Scriptures what is merely the result of human blindness and malice or at any rate of human weakness?"<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> CTM, X (Nov. 1939), 827 f.

<sup>31</sup> St. Louis ed. V, 334.

<sup>32</sup> CTM, X (Nov. 1939), 831.

### *Interprets Itself*

Closely related to the clarity of Scripture is the principle that Scripture is its own interpreter and is not open to various private interpretations. To Walther the very authority of Scripture stands or falls on this maxim.

What does this mean, that Scripture interprets Scripture? Walther briefly enunciates rules which can all be inferred from the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture.

1. If God has inspired both the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek, then all interpretations must be based upon the original text, and no church has the right to establish an authoritative translation above original texts.

2. God has adjusted the communication of His revelation to human speech (cf. Deut. 30:11-14; Rom. 10:5-8). God's Word has assumed the form of human speech (in Scripture) without error, just as the Son of God took on a human nature without sin. Hence we must accept only that interpretation which corresponds to the grammatical sense of Scripture.

3. God has given His revelation in Scripture in such a way that the sense is gotten at through the words. Thus the correct meaning of Scripture can only be found in its literal sense, that is, the sense which the Holy Spirit intended to convey in Scripture. The sense of Scripture always is the sense of the author, the sense which the author intends. Here it seems clear that to Walther a false interpretation of Scripture would tend to destroy its authority.

4. We are told by St. Paul that the Word of God can be "taught" (Titus 1:9).

Only deceivers incorporate more than one meaning in each single statement. Statements with more than one meaning would spell the end of all knowledge. For this reason Walther will recognize only one meaning of a specific passage in its specific setting (*in einer Stelle*). The so-called typical, allegorical, or parabolic sense is not a second sense in addition to and apart from the literal sense. Rather the sense of the contents of Scripture is that which is first disclosed by the words themselves. This is the sense of the words, or the literal sense.

For instance, the words in Ex. 12:46, "Neither shall ye break a bone thereof," do not have a double sense in that no bone of the passover lamb *and* of Christ would be broken. Rather it had only one sense, that no leg of the passover lamb was to be broken. But action referred to is typical. In the New Testament, however, where the fulfillment of this typical action of Christ, the antitype, is reported (John 19:36), the verbal or literal sense becomes what in the Old Testament was the sense only of the action or event (*Sache*). *LuW* 13 (April 1867), 105.

Walther warns us not to impose allegorical or parabolic meaning where no such interpretation is warranted.

5. Just as in the case of other literature we must recognize that the true meaning of the words of Scripture is often to be found obliquely through forms, such as metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, irony, etc.<sup>33</sup>

6. The many figures of speech (such as the forms mentioned above) are to be

<sup>33</sup> Strangely Walther concludes by saying, "Den Tropus der Hyperbel koennen wir in Gottes gewissem Worte nicht anerkennen." *Ibid.*, p. 106.

taken as such only when the context or parallel passages or the analogy of faith clearly demand it. We must be careful not to reject passages of Scripture or reinterpret them figuratively simply because they appear difficult or absurd to us.

7. The clarity of Scripture demands that those passages (*sedes doctrinae*) which prove the articles of our faith be clear passages. If we draw conclusions from passages which only incidentally deal with an article of faith, our conclusions must agree with the so-called proof passages (*sedes*). On the other hand one must not depart from the plain meaning of the words in proof passages in order to make his exegesis fit the analogy of faith. For in the Scriptures there may be two different mysteries, both taught in clear words, which are contradictory according to the premises of our reason. In such cases it is not for us to deny either mystery, either article of faith, but to hold both in tension and take our reason captive in obedience to faith. As surely as Scripture is God's Word, there are no actual contradictions there.

8. In the Scriptures there are abundant passages which set forth the articles of faith, passages as clear as the sun and open to the understanding of any child. "Therefore," Walther concludes, "we will accept only that exposition of a Scripture passage which agrees with the clearly revealed articles of our faith, and we reject and condemn beforehand every exposition of a Scripture passage which stands in opposition to the analogy of faith." It is clear that by such a statement Walther does not wish to impose any foreign outline or structure upon the Scriptures, but is merely asserting that

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Scripture interprets Scripture. To him the analogy of Scripture was those passages which proved specific articles of faith (Rom. 12:6). And one must interpret Scripture according to this analogy. This is the "first hermeneutical rule," he says. Jesus Himself employed it (Matt. 4:5-7) against the temptations of Satan.<sup>34</sup>

9. Our faith and our theology rest on the correct exposition of Scripture. It is most important that only that be held in the church which is based upon clear, positive exegesis. Any other position overthrows the authority and clarity of Scripture. What Walther is saying here is obvious to all of us. But it has significant implications. Walther would hold that it would be wrong to believe the theology of the Lutheran Confessions unless this theology is drawn clearly from the Scriptures. In other words, you cannot accept the Lutheran Confessions unless you accept also the manner in which these writings interpret the Scriptures. Otherwise you deny the Scripture principle and make the church or our confessions a source of theology.

10. Walther says that according to the prophecy of Christ the holy apostles would be preserved from all error. This means that we are to accept the exposition of the Old Testament which the New Testament gives as the authentic one. When the New Testament interprets the Old, that interpretation is correct.

#### *Subversive Views*

There were two views, prevailing in his day, which Walther considered particu-

larly subversive and hurtful to the authority of Scripture. The first, an opinion popular mainly in Europe, would allow one to receive or reject what Scripture says on matters which seem unimportant. To Walther this was an impossible position. "What human being, what angel, has the right to excuse us from obedience to the Word of God?"<sup>35</sup> he asks. A man may be ignorant of the stories of Solomon or David, and no great injury will be done to his faith. But to deny these stories is to attack the truthfulness of God in His Word. It is to offend God and provoke His wrath. Such a denier becomes a schismatic or a heretic according to Walther, and there can be no fellowship with him so long as he persists in his error.

A slightly modified version of the above opinion reasoned in the following manner. One may accept or reject what Scripture says on those matters concerning which the church has not yet spoken and given a decision. Walther is shocked that Lutherans could express such views. Put concretely, this would bind Lutherans to what was in the confessions, but only to those things. Such a doctrine is opposed to the clarity, the power, the authority and perfection of Scripture, and betrays a total lack of confidence in that Word. It substitutes the church for Scripture.

Scripture [says Walther] is the only criterion for determining the Christian religion and theology, the only source of Christian truth from which we can actually draw reliable facts, the only rule and norm of all faith and life, and the supreme judge, rendering the final decision in all controversies on any points of faith.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The rule is good. But we might doubt whether the Romans passage proves it.

<sup>35</sup> *CTM*, X (May 1939), 355.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, (Aug.), pp. 587 f.

Walther rightly points out that our confessions do not make doctrines but reflect and confess doctrines. He says,

The doctrines embodied in the Symbols were not included in the various articles in order that they might become doctrines of the Church but were included because they already were doctrines of the Church.<sup>36a</sup>

The opposite view would place the confessions above the Bible and make the Lutheran Church a sect.

The second theory, prominent in his day, which Walther considered insidious and baneful to the authority of Scripture was the idea that new doctrines develop from time to time in the church. That new doctrines are revealed as the church grows to adulthood was not just the allegation of Rome and the *Schwaermer* but more recently of Lutherans. Thus, it was said that we are not the children of the older teachers and fathers of the church, but they are like children to us. We must criticize them in the light of modern wisdom and insights. It is not difficult for Walther to demonstrate that this theory overthrows the very possibility of an orthodox visible church which has and confesses pure doctrine.

On the basis of this promise (John 8:31, 32), that saving truth is not a problem which men must first of all solve, but it is already contained clearly and distinctly in the words of Christ, saving truth is not a kind of philosophy which would require or at least be capable of continual forward development, reconstruction and improvement, but rather something lying before us present and ready in Scripture.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36a</sup> Ibid., (April), pp. 656 f.

<sup>37</sup> *LuW*, 5 (Jan. 1859), 1 ff.

Throughout all his discussion of the authority of Scripture and his polemics against opposing views, two definite, practical concerns are always foremost in Walther's thinking. First, he wishes to maintain that a Christian can be sure of his doctrine. Second, he wishes to maintain the possibility of an orthodox visible church. Such concerns make it impossible for him to entertain any theory of doctrinal development which is but veiled skepticism and condemns the church to the dreary life of seeking but never finding the truth, like Sisyphus, who was condemned to roll a great stone up a mountain only to see it plummet down.

Walther's childlike confidence in the authority of Scripture as God speaking was sometimes interpreted as a mark of pride and cocksureness. And there are reasons for such judgment. First, he was often very severe with other Lutherans when he suspected them of being disloyal to the divine Word. Second, he was undisturbed by the claims of scholars that the result of scientific research had blasted the authority of Holy Writ. To him God's Word towers as high as heaven over these earthbound activities of men. He says,

Though science may consider the results of its research as absolutely certain truths, we do not regard science, but Scripture as infallible. If the results of scientific research contradict the clear Scriptures, we are a priori certain that they are nothing but positive error, even though we are not able to prove them erroneous except by an appeal to the Scriptures.<sup>38</sup>

Such an ingenuous, assured attitude was no doubt irritating to many of his contemporaries and was construed as haughty and

<sup>38</sup> *LuW*, 21 (Jan. 1875), 2.

condescending toward science. But really all this only reflects Walther's single-hearted loyalty and submission to the Holy Scriptures, a submission which will always be taken by some as either arrogance or obscurantism.

### III. THE INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE

The question of the inerrancy of Scripture is a relatively modern problem in the Christian church. Of course, there had always been those who assailed the veracity and reliability of the Sacred Scriptures, but they had been outside the church. Not until the late 17th century did Christians seriously express doubt concerning the absolute infallibility of Scripture, and then there were only a few such questioning spirits. The next century saw the rise of rationalism, which militantly attacked the authority and truthfulness of Scripture. C. F. W. Walther was well acquainted with this movement. He grew up and was educated among the rationalists. The 19th-century German theology had not been able to throw off rationalism altogether.

Throughout his ministry Walther faced an almost unbroken phalanx of theologians assaulting the fortress of Scripture. In his Foreword to *Lehre und Wehre* of January 1886 he takes note of a statement of Professors Volck and Muehlau of Dorpat denying the inerrancy of the Bible. Had this statement been made in the 17th century a storm of protest would have arisen. But Walther observes in 19th-century Germany not one word of protest from any theological faculty. And why this silence? Because the statement represents the persuasion of modern theology. But such a view, Walther insists, denies the inspiration of Scripture. The Bible

then becomes a book which I must judge. I must distinguish the true from what is deceptive. I must separate the unessential from what belongs to the history of salvation. In short, to question the inerrancy of Scripture undermines all confidence in the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

#### *The Meaning of Inerrancy*

Precisely what does Walther mean when he speaks of the inerrancy of Scripture? Does he mean merely a material inerrancy, merely that Scripture is reliable? No, he means more than this. You may have a friend whom you consider reliable; yet on occasion he will make mistakes and say things which are untrue. Does Walther mean by inerrancy this, that Scripture unerringly teaches us concerning Christ and leads us to Him? No, as much as he would agree that Scripture never fails in its purpose, this is not what he means when he says that Scripture is without error (*frei von Irrthum*).<sup>39</sup> Does Walther perhaps mean that Scripture is inerrant and infallible because it says what God wants it to say? This would indeed comprise a part of his meaning. But he has something far more specific in mind. The fact that Scripture says exactly what God wants it to say may be considered the reason or the ground or the basis of the inerrancy of Scripture. But it does not tell us what inerrancy is.

What, then, does Walther mean by the inerrancy of Scripture? He means what the church has always meant, that all the declarative statements of Scripture are true, that they correspond to fact, that they correspond (as the case may be) to what

<sup>39</sup> *LuW*, 13 (April 1867), 103.

has happened or to what will happen or to what obtains. Everything which is presented in Scripture as factual *is* factual. There can be no falsehood, no mistake, no slip, in Scripture. A correlate of the above is that there are no contradictions in the Holy Scripture.

Walther applied inerrancy to all of Scripture, and what he means is quite definitely factual inerrancy, formal inerrancy. At this point he identifies himself with the older teachers in our church, who had grappled with the entire problem and spoken strongly on the matter. He quotes with favor, for instance, the much-maligned statement of Quenstedt, and makes that statement his own confession,

The holy canonical Scriptures in their original text are the infallible truth and free from every error. That is to say, in the sacred canonical Scriptures there is no lie, no deceit, no error, even the slightest, either in content or in words, but every single word handed down in the Scriptures is most true, whether it pertains to doctrine, ethics, history, chronology, topography, or onomastics; and no ignorance, lack of understanding, forgetfulness, or lapse of memory, can or should be attributed to the amanuenses of the Holy Spirit in their writing of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>40</sup>

Like the old orthodox Lutherans Walther believed that the inerrancy of Scripture must be accepted *a priori*. With all due respect for scientific endeavor, we must say the investigations of science cannot disprove the Bible, nor is science necessary to support the Bible's truthfulness. If the

conclusions of science disagree with statements of Scripture, the conclusions of science must be false.<sup>41</sup> In other words, it is impossible for Scripture to err. We must believe what Scripture says on all points, before any empirical proofs are offered.<sup>42</sup> And why must this be our attitude? Because Scripture is God speaking. "Whoever believes with all his heart that the Bible is God's Word cannot believe anything else than that it is inerrant (*irrthumslos*)."

Since inerrancy is due to the divine origin of Scripture, Walther realized that a weak position toward the doctrine of inspiration would usually involve a denial of the inerrancy of Scripture. This happens, for instance, when Hase and Beck make inspiration a matter of poetic genius only. It occurs also when Twisten restricts inspiration to only parts of the Scriptures.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, Walther maintained that when the inerrancy of the Bible is questioned the divine origin of Holy Writ is certainly vitiated. The two hang together: the inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture.

Inerrancy also touches the matter of interpretation. Walther believed that the New Testament interpretation of the Old was necessarily correct, for it was an inspired interpretation. To him any suggestion that the apostles took liberties or did not fully understand its meaning when interpreting the Old Testament was an outright denial of Scripture. There were many theologians in those days who did not hesitate to criticize the exegesis of the apostles in the New Testament. Meyer,

<sup>40</sup> *LuW*, 21 (Sept. 1875), 257. Cf. also Baier-Walther, *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, St. Louis, 1881, I, 96. The statement is from Quenstedt, *op. cit.* I, 77.

<sup>41</sup> *LuW*, 21 (Feb. 1875), 35.

<sup>42</sup> *Was lehren, etc.*, p. 44.

<sup>43</sup> *LuW*, 17 (Feb. 1871), 33 ff.

for example, accused St. Paul of improper and Rabbinic exegesis in Gal. 3:16, where the apostle claims that the singular "seed" in Gen. 12:3 points to Christ.<sup>44</sup> Tholuck taught that Matthew (1:22) was mistaken when he made Is. 7:14 ("Behold, a virgin shall conceive . . .") refer to the birth of Christ.<sup>45</sup> Walther felt that such a spirit betrayed a lack of faith in God's Word, Scripture.<sup>46</sup> Christ promised that His apostles would be preserved from all error. Therefore their exposition of the Old Testament was authentic.<sup>47</sup>

### *Arguments Against the Infallibility of Scripture*

Let us now consider some of the specific arguments against the infallibility of Scripture. What sort of evidence did Walther's adversaries marshal? How did he reply to these charges?

#### *Human Failings*

It was said that there were human failings apparent in Scripture. This was the opinion of Kahnis, Luthardt, and others.<sup>48</sup> There was barbarous language in Scripture, bad grammar and logic. Purely personal judgments and differing viewpoints were also quite obvious. Walther actually offers little answer to this charge. It was an old canard, going back to the 17th century, and has often been answered. Bad grammar and different approaches, uncritical expressions, simply do not mean error. But all such picayunish charges annoy Walther

apparently when they are offered as factual evidence against the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.

#### *Conflicts with Science*

It was said that scientific facts often showed the Bible to be in error. Walther at this point merely denied the possibility of scientific facts being at variance with Scripture. They were not facts, he said, but suppositions.

No, not facts but suppositions which have been invented to explain the facts are what contradicts the Bible. But if there were even one point in which the Bible contradicted the assured and sober results of modern science, a Christian would simply reserve the solution of the difficulty for the school of heaven and stick with the word of Scripture rather than arrogantly try to become the master over Him who has created him and all other creatures together with all their knowledge.<sup>49</sup>

Walther possessed a very high regard for science. "How could we call ourselves Lutherans, yes, even Christians, if we were despisers of science?" he asks.<sup>50</sup> Scripture certainly does not urge upon us a negative position toward science (cf. Moses, Solomon, Paul, Luke). But true science will never contradict the Bible. Walther recognizes that there will be many areas where gaps will exist between the findings of science and Scripture. When this occurs, he urges the Christian to be cautious and not to be overly disturbed if a solution is not at hand. Our faith does not depend, it cannot depend, upon our harmonizing all of Scripture with the findings of modern science.

Walther's counsel on this point is still

<sup>44</sup> *Kritisch exegetisches Handbuch über den Brief an die Galater* (Goettingen, 1862), p. 134.

<sup>45</sup> *Das Alte Testament im Neuen Testament* (Gotha, 1861), p. 42.

<sup>46</sup> *Was lehren, etc.*, p. 12.

<sup>47</sup> *LuW*, 13 (April 1867), 110.

<sup>48</sup> *LuW*, 21 (Sept. 1875), 259.

<sup>49</sup> *Was lehren, etc.*, p. 30.

<sup>50</sup> *LuW*, 21 (Jan. 1875), 4.

very timely and significant. He took a very dim attitude toward apologetics which would endeavor to demonstrate the truth of Scripture or Christianity. This is not the way to strengthen the church or to save the apostate world. Such an approach would betray an uneasy lack of faith in us, and it simply could not solve all the problems which loom up in continued succession. In other words, Walther feels that we will just have to live with many tensions; what we must do is place ourselves under the Scriptures and there to take our stand. Permit me to quote him at some length on this concern:

We are certain [he says] that there cannot be or ever is a real contradiction between Christian theology and true science, science *in abstracto*. But we are equally certain that it is not nor can it be the task of a theologian to reconcile our Biblical theology and science *in concreto*. The charge is indeed valid that in our efforts to lead the present unbelieving generation back to faith we make no attempt to demonstrate to the world the harmony of faith with science. But we see no reproach in this charge; rather we glory in it, and we will not, by the grace of God, permit anyone ever to rob us of this glorying. For we are very certain that it is not possible to help the present apostate world with the lie that the divinely revealed truth is in perfect accord with the wisdom of this world; only the preaching of the divine foolishness, of the old unaltered Gospel, can help the world. Paul as well as the history of the church of all ages and of every Christian testifies that the "foolish Gospel" is the power of God unto salvation to all that believe, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16). A person who has been won for Christianity by showing him that Christianity

can pass the sharpest probe of science is not yet won; his faith is no faith.<sup>51</sup>

### Contradictions

A third claim against the inerrancy of Scripture was that there were definite contradictions in the Bible. Such a claim Walther, purely on a priori grounds, will not grant. If the Bible contradicted itself there would be error. But in fact the Bible does not contradict itself. Walther is wholly aware of the many discrepancies and difficulties one encounters in reading Scripture and in trying to harmonize passages and sections. Enormous tomes, attempting to solve many of these vexing problems, have been written. And many of these discrepancies, Walther was fully convinced, would persist and never be satisfactorily reconciled. When such difficulties arise Walther felt that the older Christian theologians had done the right thing. These old pious Christians regarded it as their duty to solve difficulties in Scripture in order to strengthen and confirm troubled consciences. "But when they came to certain difficulties which they could not solve, they humbly doffed their little doctor's hat, bowed before Holy Scripture, admitted that they were but poor students with the Holy Spirit as their Teacher and said, This difficulty will be fully solved; if not before, then certainly in eternity."<sup>52</sup>

### Erred in Minor Matters

A very common opinion in Walther's day was the notion that Scripture was infallible merely in presenting the message

<sup>51</sup> *LuW*, 21 (Feb. 1875), 41, 42. Translated in Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis, 1950), I, 164.

<sup>52</sup> "Walthers Verdienst um das *sola Scriptura*," *LuW*, 57 (April 1911), 157.



concerning Christ and the way of salvation. This was its purpose. However, when Scripture touched upon minor matters which did not concern faith and life (matters such as details of history, chronology, etc.) it often erred. And who will deny, it was declaimed, that much in the Bible is unimportant and peripheral? But such slips and accidents do not matter, just as it makes no difference when a poet makes mistakes.<sup>53</sup>

Walther refuses to grant the assumption behind this whole argument. He believes that nothing is unimportant in Scripture, where the Holy Spirit Himself is the Reporter. There is purpose even in matters which may seem peripheral to us. If the order of events is sometimes *hysteron proteron* or apparently confused, all this has its foundation in the wisdom of God and cannot be called error. And whatever Scripture says concerning the order of nature, even in passing, God Himself says.<sup>54</sup> Commenting upon the theologians who have espoused the opinions mentioned above Walther has these strong words to say,

These, then, are believing theologians! May God have mercy upon their faith. For according to their words they don't believe half of what they ought to. Furthermore, by their course of action they do not distinguish themselves from so-called unbelievers in any way, but only by the degree of their concessions. One thing they have in common with each other: the Bible is neither inspired in the sense in which the Christian church has always

meant, nor is it, properly speaking, God's Word.<sup>55</sup>

In a similar vein Walther says on another occasion,

Whoever thinks that he can find one error in holy Scripture does not believe in holy Scripture but in himself; for even if he accepted everything else as true, he would believe it not because Scripture says so but because it agrees with his reason or with his sentiments.<sup>56</sup>

### Higher Criticism

What was behind the many attacks against the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture was higher criticism. The higher critics had been nursed with the milk of the prevailing and overweening rationalism of the day. Many of them disclaimed the possibility of miracles and entertained no predisposition toward the divine origin of Scripture. The Bible was a purely human product. The various books of the Bible were often considered to be a hodgepodge of different human records. The so-called positive, or conservative, theologians that Walther is primarily concerned with seldom went all the way with the higher critics. But Walther felt that they had conceded far too much to what he considered rank unbelief.

Kahn had denied the authenticity of the Book of Daniel, saying that it had been written hundreds of years after the prophet during the reign of King Antiochus Epiphanes. He brought forth many examples of what he thought evidence from the book itself to prove his point. The book, then, was a pious fraud; it was passed off as being written by Daniel.

<sup>53</sup> Johann Beck, *Einleitung in das System der christlichen Lehre* (Stuttgart, 1838), pp. 241 ff. This was roughly the position of Twisten and others.

<sup>54</sup> *LuW*, 32 (March 1886), 65 ff.

<sup>55</sup> *Was lehren, etc.*, p. 17.

<sup>56</sup> *CTM*, X (April 1939), 255.

Moreover, it did not give actual history at all. Walther replied that according to Matt. 24:15 Christ believed that Daniel did write the book by his name, for Christ quotes certain words contained in the book as having been written by Daniel himself. This alone settled the question of authorship for Walther. No other evidence of any kind could assail the inference from Christ's words. Of Kahnis Walther has these very sharp words to say, "Whoever holds that Jesus is the Son of God will hold that Kahnis' statement to the contrary is blasphemous. Yes, blasphemous. I am not using too strong an expression."<sup>57</sup> Walther charges that a later writer assuming the name of Daniel would be guilty of the same crime as the popes who claimed to have their authority from the fraudulent Donation of Constantine. To him there is no such thing as a "pious fraud." Kahnis' position he calls "down-right unbelief" (*platteste Unglaube*).

Walther assumes the same attitude toward such an evangelical theologian as Delitzsch, who denied the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Delitzsch projected a rather unique view concerning the authorship of the first five books of Scripture. He said there were five sources, or factors, going into the writing of these books. First, there was the author who was called the Jehovist. Second, there was the basic source material which he used. Third, there was the framework given the book itself. Fourth, there were certain other sources which were brought in and used. Fifth, there was the historical method. To all this Walther replies,

Who then of these five was really inspired? Was it the Jehovist, or the source

material, or the building of the framework, or the historical method, or the notations brought from other sources? Perhaps all five. But if it was all five, then in any case the poor Bible in this matter is in error for it designates Moses as the author of all the books.<sup>58</sup>

Walther in the last sentence is no doubt thinking of the statements of Christ which indicate that He believed in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. It is clear that matters of authorship and authenticity do often touch the problem of inerrancy so far as Walther is concerned.

Delitzsch also believed that there were errors of thought and arrangement in Scriptures inasmuch as the writers' spiritual ability was not always perfect. Walther does not relish taking issue so strongly with such a pious theologian as Delitzsch, but he must.

How in all the world [he says] is it possible that a man like Prof. Delitzsch, so undoubtedly God-fearing, could in such a way place himself over the Word of the living God? I believe there is only one explanation for it. Like hundreds of others of his kind he has not been content to remain in the simplicity of our faith. He has desired to say and to be something special.<sup>59</sup>

#### Practical Concerns

Walther's concerns in defending the truthfulness of Scripture are the same as those which prompt him to fight for Scripture's inspiration and authority. They are practical.

If we conceded that only the least error could be present in the Bible, then it is

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 31. Cf. Franz Delitzsch, *Die Genesis* (Leipzig, 1853), p. 234.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>57</sup> *Was lehren, etc.*, p. 42.



up to man to separate the truth from the error. Man, then, is placed above the Scriptures, and Scripture ceases to be the source and norm of faith. Human reason is made the norm of truth, and Scripture sinks to the position of a *norma normata*. The least deviation from the old inspiration doctrine introduces a rationalistic germ into theology and contaminates the whole body of doctrine.<sup>60</sup>

And Walther is prepared to show that a low opinion of Scripture or doubt concerning its inerrancy will usually result in many aberrations and false teachings. When von Hofmann implies that there are errors in Scripture, it is by no means surprising that he denies also the vicarious atonement, the Biblical Christology, and other points. Walther believes that to build all our theology upon Scripture is the only sound platform for Christian action. And this involves an inerrant Scripture. To this we will surely wish to voice our hearty Amen.

#### Lessons from Walther

There are, I believe, two lessons we might learn from Walther's discussions and emphasis upon the authority and infallibility of Scripture. First, we might recall what he once said about theology moving as the waxing and waning of the moon. In other words, old errors and opinions have a way of cropping up in new dress. We today have seen this. The old heresies which Walther opposed in his day are still being advanced. Present neo-orthodoxy is saying something about Scripture and revelation quite like what those old positive theologians said. In a very true sense the neo-orthodox theologians today are reprobation theologians; they are not very

original. In opposing this theology we will find Walther can be of great help to us. He faced many of the same problems we face. And he manifested a firm confidence in the God of Scripture, a confident spirit which will serve as a mighty example to us all when we become confused or hesitant in confessing the truth. Today we must speak forthrightly as he spoke. For nothing has happened, nothing can happen, to make us change our stand on the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture.

Second, we might learn from Walther that conviction regarding the divine origin and inerrancy of Scripture does not lead anyone into legalism and atomistic exegesis but to a correct use of the Bible. And such a conviction springs from a true love and devotion to the Bible and from the correct use of the Bible. Listen to Walther,

As we ask in reference to all doctrine: What saith the Scripture? so we ask also in respect to the doctrine of inspiration: What does Scripture itself say in regard to its majesty and origin? And what Scripture says we believe, teach, and confess. From Scripture, and only from Scripture, have we constructed our knowledge concerning inspiration; therefore we bow to the Scriptures.<sup>61</sup>

In other words, our position regarding the origin and infallibility of Scripture is Scriptural, and it leads us to a true appreciation and love of the Bible. And so with Walther we confess,

We believe and are sure that this despised book is the truth, the Word of the living God.<sup>62</sup>

St. Louis, Mo.

<sup>61</sup> *LuW*, 57 (April 1911), 157.

<sup>62</sup> *Casual-Predigten und -Reden* (St. Louis, 1889), p. 304.

<sup>60</sup> *LuW*, 34 (July-Aug. 1888), 196.

# Luther's Alleged Anti-Semitism

By CARL S. MEYER

A RECENT best-seller dredges up the old charges that Luther was violently opposed to the Jews, that he was a "savage anti-Semite,"<sup>1</sup> and with that, a "ferocious believer in absolute obedience to political authority."<sup>2</sup> According to this writer, William Shirer, Luther's words and sentiments gave the rulers of Nazi Germany, Hitler, Goering, Himmler, words and a pattern of conduct to follow in their program against the Jews.<sup>3</sup>

What are the facts in the case? Specifically, what was Luther's attitude toward the Jews?

The question is not a new one nor has it lacked answers. In the year in which Hitler came to power Erich Vogelsang in Germany wrote a scholarly analysis of the question.<sup>4</sup> Roland H. Bainton's best-selling and reliable biography of Luther comes

to grips with the problem,<sup>5</sup> and from Heidelberg University a front-ranking Luther student gives an authoritative answer to the question.<sup>6</sup>

Luther's main writings against the Jews are *Wider die Sabbathler* (1537),<sup>7</sup> *Von den Juden und ihren Lügen* (1543),<sup>8</sup> and *Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi* (1543).<sup>9</sup>

"For Luther the Jewish question is first and last the Christ question," Vogelsang affirms.<sup>10</sup> Bainton, too, points this out.<sup>11</sup> "To him the Jewish question was the reversal of the Christ question," Bornkamm says and shows that Luther was concerned with the suppression of Jewish synagogue services and not of the Jewish race.<sup>12</sup> Already in 1523 Luther had written *Dass Jesus Christus ein geborner Jude sei*.<sup>13</sup> In it he makes a missionary appeal, hopeful that at least some of the Jews will heed the Gospel and come to faith in Christ.

<sup>1</sup> William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), p. 91: "But it may be said, in passing, that this towering but erratic genius [Martin Luther], this savage anti-Semite and hater of Rome, who combined in his tempestuous character so many of the best and worst qualities of the German — the coarseness, the boisterousness, the fanaticism, the intolerance, the violence, but also the honesty, the simplicity, the self-scrutiny, the passion for learning and for music and for poetry and for righteousness in the eyes of God — left a mark on the life of the Germans, for both good and bad, more indelible, more fateful, than was wrought by any other single individual before or since."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Erich Vogelsang, *Luthers Kampf gegen die Juden*, Sammlung gemeinverständlicher Vorträge und Schriften aus dem Gebiet der Theologie und Religionsgeschichte, Nr. 168 (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1933).

<sup>5</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), pp. 379, 380.

<sup>6</sup> Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*, trans. Martin H. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), pp. 31 f., 226—233. See also Arnas K. E. Holmio, *The Lutheran Reformation and the Jews* (Hancock, Mich.: Finnish Lutheran Book Concern, c. 1949).

<sup>7</sup> WA, L, 309, 337; St. L., XX, 1829—1861.

<sup>8</sup> WA, LIII, 412—552; St. L., XX, 1861 to 2029.

<sup>9</sup> WA, LIII, 573—648; St. L., XX, 2029 to 2109.

<sup>10</sup> Vogelsang, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Bainton, *Here I Stand*, p. 255.

<sup>12</sup> Bornkamm, p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> WA, XI, 307—336; St. L., XX, 1793 to 1821.

Under the papacy the Jews had little reason to become converted to Christianity, Luther believed. "If I were a Jew, I would suffer the rack ten times before I would go over to the pope," he said.<sup>14</sup> Luther probably did not know Boccaccio's story of the Jew who went to Rome and there was converted to Roman Catholicism, because, as he said, if this church was able to exist in such a corrupted state it must be the true religion.

Luther advocated that the Jews be permitted to work and live among the Germans.

If one wants to be of help to them, one must not use the law of the papacy but of Christian love on them, accept them amicably, permit them to ply their trades and work with us, so that they may hear and see our Christian doctrine and life. And if some of them are stiff-necked, what of it? After all, we are not all good Christians either.<sup>15</sup>

During the Middle Ages the Jews had been subjected to the Inquisition in Spain and then expelled (1492). The expulsion of the Jews from England (1290) and from France (1306) may not have been known to Luther. In 1525 they were excluded from Naples. In 1547, the year after Luther's death, stringent laws were made against them in Rome, confining them to the Ghetto. These references do not tell about the pogroms, persecutions, sumptuary laws, and repressive measures against the Jews during the Middle Ages.

Luther reacted unfavorably to such treatment of the Jews. His harsh words

against them were not for economic, social, or political, but for theological reasons.

Luther did not advocate religious toleration in the sense in which a Sebastian Castellio or Roger Williams did.<sup>16</sup> However, in the controversy between Johann Reuchlin and the Cologne scholars Luther sided with Reuchlin, who opposed the burning of Jewish books. "Martin [Luther] declares that we have God's word for it that the Jews are bound to abuse and blaspheme Christ and if we take away what they have written they will simply write the worse."<sup>17</sup>

"... the Jews are bound to abuse and blaspheme Christ," this is the key to an understanding of Luther's expressions against the Jews. "Whoever denies, blasphemes, curses Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Virgin Mary, denies, blasphemes, curses God the Father Himself, who created the heavens and the earth. This is what the Jews do."<sup>18</sup>

Now since Turks and Jews hate Christ and persecute His Word, they certainly also hate the God who has created heaven and earth, do not believe in Him, and do not honor Him.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Travail of Religious Liberty*, Harper Torchbooks (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), has an excellent, very readable account of some of the main advocates of toleration.

<sup>17</sup> Robert H. Fife, *The Revolt of Martin Luther* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), pp. 208 f., with reference to WAB, I, 23, Feb. (?) 1514.

<sup>18</sup> WA, LIII, 531, quoted by Vogelsang, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says: An Anthology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), I, 159, No. 472; from WA, LII, 731; St. L., XIIIa, 1285.

<sup>14</sup> WA, TR, 2912a, quoted by Bainton, *Here I Stand*, p. 379.

<sup>15</sup> WA, XI, 336, quoted by Bornkamm, p. 227.

Again he wrote:

God the Father cannot tolerate anyone who wants to go to Him or approach Him unless he brings His beloved Son Christ with Him. . . . That is why Jews . . . who despise this Son of God with His suffering, death, and resurrection and propose to come to God in a different way, stand condemned.<sup>20</sup>

The pride of the Jews in their race and origin, that they were "children of Abraham," was repulsive to Luther, because the Jews staked their hope of heaven on this fact. They pointed to the fact that they were circumcised and believed that this Old Testament rite of the covenant would avail them. They boasted that they had the Law and the Prophets.

What an incalculable effort they put forth in their search for salvation! But all this effort of theirs will prove to be futile and wasted. It is terrible that this great effort to find God with all their services of worship will be utterly wasted.<sup>21</sup>

They failed to recognize that Jesus was the Promised One of God as foretold in the Law and the Prophets. Luther said very pointedly: "Shame on the Jews for not wanting to tolerate the Son! This is why God has destroyed and rejected them."<sup>22</sup> Luther found fault with the Jews because they attempted to keep the Law of Moses and did not rely on the promise of the coming Messiah.

The Law was given in order that by its light they [the Jews] might the better come to know their cursed state and the

more fervently and heartily desire the promised Seed; in this they had an advantage over all the heathen world. But they turned this advantage into a disadvantage; they undertook to keep the Law by their own strength and failed to learn from it their needy and cursed state. Thus they shut the door upon themselves, so that the Seed was compelled to pass them by.<sup>23</sup>

They had a false Messianic hope. Luther emphasized this point.

Then, too, as an interpreter of the Old Testament—he taught Old Testament exegesis at the University of Wittenberg—he had grave misgivings about rabbinical methods of exegesis. Their interpretations of the Mosaic Law, which Jesus already condemned in the sermon on the Mount, Luther, too, condemned.

He noted the dispersion of the Jews and saw the fearful consequences of the wrath of God in it.<sup>24</sup>

For Luther there was a deep warning in the words of St. Paul: "Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear" (Rom. 11:20). To Rom. 11:22 Luther writes:

The lesson of this passage is this: when we see the fall of the Jews or the heretics or others, we should not concentrate our attention on the person that fell but on the work that God performs in them, so that we may learn to fear God by the example of the misfortune of someone else and not entertain any presumptuous pride with respect to ourselves. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the apostle teaches us here that we give consideration to the

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., I, 187, 188, No. 546; from WA, XX, 362; St. L., III, 753.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., III, 1259, No. 4015; from WA, XXXV, 574; St. L., VIII, 177.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., III, 1403, No. 4526; from WA, XXXVI, 183; St. L., XIIIb, 2092 f.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., II, 755, No. 2336; from WA, VII, 800; St. L., V, 1441.

<sup>24</sup> Vogelsang, pp. 12—18.

one who performs this work rather than that we make a comparison between others and ourselves.

In opposition to this, many display an amazing stupidity when they are so presumptuous as to call the Jews "dogs" or accursed or whatever they choose to name them, though they themselves do not know who or what sort they themselves are before God. They should feel compassion for them fearing that they themselves may have to take a similar punishment, but instead they rashly heap blasphemous insults upon them.<sup>25</sup>

The Jews are a warning to the Christians by their very existence. Luther wrote that he did not wish to quarrel with the Jews, but he wanted to be certain that "we" (he says) do not fall under the wrath of God, but hear His Word and do not neglect the day of grace.<sup>26</sup>

There is no greater wrath of God than His silence, such as that with which the Jews are now being treated. Against them the wrath of our Lord God is so severely inflamed that not one little word or one sign has come from Him in fifteen hundred years.<sup>27</sup>

The story of the sufferings and tribulations of Jewish people for 15 centuries, therefore, is a warning and proof that they are in error in rejecting Christ as the Messiah,

since they did not have to suffer more than seventy years for far more manifest, horrible, and murderous sins, during which

period of time they, furthermore, were not deserted by prophets and consolation, but now in their present misery not even a fly buzzes comfort to them with a single wing. If this does not mean that they are forsaken of God, then the devil may also boast that he is not yet forsaken by God.<sup>28</sup>

Luther hoped for the conversion of individual Jews. There is no basis for the contention that Luther looked for the mass conversion of the Jews and that in his disappointment at the failure of such a happening he turned against the Jews. The statement that he looked for more individual conversions, however, seems to be in keeping with the facts.<sup>29</sup>

Luther's attitude against the Jews was conditioned in part, too, by his point of view on usury. The Jews were among the chief moneylenders of that day, and that often at outrageous rates of interest. Small debtors particularly were often rendered helpless. The rise of capitalism made for some hardships in the agrarian economy of Wittenberg and Saxony. The state, Luther believed, ought to regulate the economic life for the common welfare and forbid ruinous rates of interest.<sup>30</sup>

From this it should be evident that Luther's pronouncements against the Jews were not racial but religious. Luther's alleged anti-Semitism may be answered by Bornkamm's four points:

First, Luther's accounting with the Jews involves a religious principle. The crime of the Jews is of a religious nature: blasphemy of Christ. And Luther's goal, even

<sup>25</sup> *Luther: Lectures on Romans*, trans. and ed. Wilhelm Pauck, *Library of Christian Classics*, xv (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), pp. 313, 314.

<sup>26</sup> WA, LIII, 522, quoted by Vogelsang, p. 20.

<sup>27</sup> *What Luther Says*, III, 1558, No. 5064, from WA, TR, V, No. 5553.

<sup>28</sup> WA, L, 336, quoted by Bornkamm, p. 228.

<sup>29</sup> Bainton, *Here I Stand*, pp. 379 f.

<sup>30</sup> Bornkamm, p. 232; Vogelsang, pp. 25 to 32.

though he entertained little hope of attaining it even to a modest degree, is also religious: the conversion of individual Jews. . . .

Secondly, in its official capacity the government has to proceed against such manifest blasphemy. . . .

Thirdly, the conversion of individual Jews remains the object of their public suppression. Even the severe suggestions in the writing *Of the Jews and Their Lies* were to serve their salvation. . . .

Fourthly, the usury of the Jews also arouses Luther's ire and indignation. . . . However, we must not overlook the fact

that it was not primarily the question of usury — clearly, this is only secondary — that provokes Luther's hostility toward the Jews. He has but one reason for his harshest counsel: "If we are to remain unsullied by the blasphemy of the Jews and do not wish to take part in it, we must be separated from them, and they must be driven out of the country."<sup>31</sup>

St. Louis, Mo.

<sup>31</sup> Bornkamm, pp. 230—232, with reference to WA, LIII, 538. For a very comprehensive and well-organized compilation of "Luther on the Jews" see the St. Louis edition of his works, XXIII, 875—902. This compilation consists of some 8,500 words.

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# The Hymn-of-the-Week Plan

By RALPH D. GEHRKE

A RECENT development in the field of church music has been the appearance, or better, the reappearance, of the hymn-of-the-week plan, that is, the plan whereby each Sunday or festival has its own particular hymn. Such a hymn is sometimes called the *de tempore* hymn, that is, a hymn that fits the time, the general season and the specific day of the church year. Such a hymn is also sometimes called the Gradual hymn because the historic place for the chief hymn in the service is between Epistle and Gospel where the Gradual is sung. And such a hymn may also be called the hymn of the week.

There is very good precedent for the use of the hymn-of-the-week plan. And a brief introduction into its history may clarify its nature and use. Essentially this hymn is a response to the Word of God. It is part of that continual reciprocal rhythm between God's Word and our response that runs through the entire service. As in the synagog service each lection was responded to with a psalm, so in the early church the reading of the Word was followed by a psalm or psalm verses. The response to the Old Testament lesson was the so-called Gradual psalm; the response to the Epistle was the so-called Hallelujah psalm.

Of them the eminent liturgical scholar Jungmann says,<sup>1</sup> "These songs were not

designed to fill up a pause in the service (while, presumably, liturgical actions were going on) but stood between the readings as independent parts of the service, as periods of pious meditation and joyous singing now that the Word of God had struck human ears." The congregation also took part in the singing of the Gradual and Hallelujah psalms by joining in on the refrainlike antiphon.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE PLAN

In his *Formula Missae*, the Latin Mass for use in large churches that had choir schools, Luther retained the Gradual in the rather sophisticated form then current. In the German Mass (*Deutsche Messe*), designed for smaller congregations in villages, etc., however, Luther gave the Gradual back to the congregation, making a significant change in its form. For since the Gradual had in the course of time become a rather complicated song sung by the Gregorian solo cantor and the choir, Luther replaced it by what was to be the psalm's direct successor, the hymn sung by the congregation. In fact, often in the 16th and 17th centuries this chief hymn of the service was simply called the German psalm (*der deutsche Psalm*).<sup>2</sup>

Many church constitutions during the age of the Reformation followed Luther's suggestions and prescribed the hymns he suggested. And so it came about that

<sup>1</sup> *Missarum sollemnia*, as quoted in Otto Brodde und Christa Mudler, *Das Graduallied, theologische und kirchenmusikalische Handreichung zum Gemeindesingen* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1954), I, 533.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Blankenburg, "Der gottesdienstliche Liedgesang der Gemeinde," in *Leiturgia, Handbuch des evangelischen Gottesdienstes* (Kassel: Johannes Stauda Verlag, 1961), IV, 618 ff.



already in the 16th century a rather definite series of hymns developed which assigned each Sunday and festival a special hymn that usually reflected the Gospel for the day. Nicolaus Selnecker's "Church Hymns" (*Kirchengesänge*) of the year 1587 make this clear. In his great history of Lutheran worship<sup>3</sup> Paul Graff gives a rather clear picture of the nature of the hymn-of-the-week plan that was more or less in force, even through the days of Pietism and Enlightenment, until the plan was entirely lost at the end of the 18th century in the age of Rationalism.

We know that this order was still in force in Bach's day. It was only after the old traditional order of reading the Epistle and the Holy Gospel was no longer followed, and after the number of lessons read in church was reduced to only one, that the Gradual hymn, which "rimed with the Gospel," lost out.

In his wonderful little Bach Centennial address "Johann Sebastian Bach und der Gottesdienst seiner Zeit,"<sup>4</sup> Christhard Mahrenholz gives an interesting account of Bach's fight against the inroads which were tending to dissolve the *de tempore* hymn plan. In speaking of Bach's tenacious retention of the old chorales and his use of them as *cantus firmus* themes, he says:

This uncompromising holding fast to the traditional series of hymns was not restricted to the field of his own cantatas but extended to the singing of the congregation. And this established the fact that Bach was not interested only in the more

artistic and musically sophisticated side of well-ordered church music. It was traditional in the Lutheran Church of Bach's day that the cantor, as the appropriate trained professional, had the duty of watching over the selection of hymns. He made the selection from a number of hymns established for each individual Sunday. Here Bach was uncompromising, as is clear from the well-known incident of his quarrel with the Pastor of St. Thomas Church, about the choosing of hymns. Even otherwise sympathetic biographers of Bach think that in this instance Bach was showing himself in a rather bad light. After he had once granted Pastor Gaudlitz the right to choose the hymns, these critics feel, he should not have dared, after a year, to take back this prerogative by appealing to his rights as cantor of Saint Thomas! But Bach could delegate the choice of hymns to Pastor Gaudlitz only within the framework of the existing order of hymns. Gaudlitz, however, did not confine himself to that order. That is the only reason why Bach took back what he had first granted to the pastor. Characteristically Bach explained his action by stating that it was his duty to keep vigilant watch that the hymns be chosen "according to the order of their Gospels and of the Dresden Hymnbook, which has prescribed their order in that manner." Since Pastor Gaudlitz chose hymns "that were not customary" (*die nicht üblich waren*), i. e., that did not fit the *de tempore*, Bach for the sake of "well-ordered church music" (*regulierte Kirchenmusik*, Bach's ideal) had to take back to himself the function that was his right and duty as cantor of St. Thomas.

In protecting this clear-cut liturgical series of *de tempore* hymns Bach was guarding against a misunderstanding that considers church music only a decorative addition to the service. Even as every

<sup>3</sup> Significantly called *Geschichte der Auflösung der alten gottesdienstlichen Formen in der evangel. Kirche Deutschlands* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1937).

<sup>4</sup> Christhard Mahrenholz, *Musik und Kirche*, XX (1950), 145 ff.



Sunday had its hymn of the week, its lessons, its sermon, so every Sunday also had church music which was an organic part of the service.

#### THE LOSS OF THE PLAN

The reason for the eventual loss of this very wholesome liturgical order of hymns of the week has been traced by Philipp Reich to three main causes.<sup>5</sup> First, the growth in the number of hymns in the hymnbooks of the last part of the post-Bach age meant that there was also a growing number of hymns assigned to each respective Sunday. And as has often happened, a larger selection of hymns in a hymnbook is always made available only at the expense of the "canon," the solid core of good, time-tested solid hymns. Furthermore, the "main hymn" in the Reformation age had not been "the sermon hymn" (that is, the hymn that is sung before the sermon; if anything was sung in the Reformation age at that point in the service it was only a *suspiria*, a small prayer verse) but rather the Gradual hymn, which here we are calling the hymn of the week. Only after the sermon had become the exclusive center of the service did the hymns or the hymn stanzas that framed it necessarily have to relate to its specific theme. Thirdly, with the restriction of the service to the sermon as the only focal point (and the concomitant loss of the old Lutheran understanding and use of the Sacrament) the Reformation age's entire understanding of the service was lost, and as Paul Graff has shown, eventually a vital understanding of the church year was also lost. A *Zeitgeist* that

took its cue from the prevailing movements of the Enlightenment and Rationalism made its influence felt in the service; the church year had to take a back seat in favor of the civil year. Soon the dissolution of the *de tempore* hymn series was an established fact.

A reconsideration of the hymn-of-the-week problems came only with the attempts at liturgical repristination in the 19th century in the works of such men as Freiherr von Liliencron and Ludwig Schoeberlein, who championed the reintroduction of the hymn-of-the-week plan. But it seems the time for such restoration was not propitious. Even the great Bavarian hymnologist Friedrich Layriz (known to many of us because C. F. W. Walther and his friends introduced his *Choralbuch* settings, with their original Reformation age vivacity and color, into so many of our congregations in the Middle West, so that through him we have in many respects inherited the results of the great hymnological research of people like Winterfeld and can sing the best hymns in their original rhythmical settings) opposed the plan because he had no understanding of its value. This writer has often wondered and speculated about what would now be the situation in our midst if Layriz had accepted Liliencron's suggestions and if Walther and the men around him—who gave us such a wonderful little hymnal with all the old Lutheran treasures—had espoused the hymn-of-the-week plan. This writer suggests that we would be a stronger church today, not only musically but also liturgically and doctrinally. But the efforts for restoration in this respect were officially rejected in Ger-

<sup>5</sup> Philipp Reich, ed. *Das Wochenlied*, (Kassel: Johannes Stauda Verlag, 1952), pp. 4 ff.

many and, to my knowledge, never faced up to here in America.

#### THE PLAN RESTORED

The honor of having revived and to a certain extent restored the hymn-of-the-week plan in recent times goes to a number of contemporary German scholars, pastors, and church musicians, foremost among whom are Christhard Mahrenholz and Pastor Wilhelm Thomas. In 1934, in the midst of the *Kirchenkampf* (when the Christian church in Germany realized that it was being threatened in its very existence by an anti-Christian nationalistic power that was already seeking to infiltrate the church), these men, at the Pentecost session of the executive board of the German Choral Union, realized, as Mahrenholz himself tells the story,<sup>6</sup> that the crisis could not be met by clever church-political maneuvering but only by confessing the Gospel as it was given to the church in its confessions and in its heritage. And it was these men who raised the basic demand for the series of original Lutheran Gradual hymns as the basis of their church music work. Other pastors and church musicians of Germany added their contributions, notably Konrad Ameln and Walter Reindel. And despite the evil days that had descended upon them the plan did take root. After the war (in 1948) the plan was revised. And now the new *Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch* presents the entire series to all territorial churches, and we are told it has found widespread acceptance in various parts of Germany, also in the Free Churches.

In substituting a congregational hymn

for the ancient Gradual psalmody, the *Deutsche Messe* introduced an innovation. In liturgical practice Luther gave the congregation's hymn the same function and rank as the psalm had possessed. But while the old pre-Reformation Gradual psalm in most cases was primarily an expression of meditative adoration, the Lutheran hymn has a complex character. It is adoration and meditation, and the best hymns of our heritage always have these elements in them. But they are more than adoration. They have, accompanying this devotional aspect, a strong proclamation aspect, sometimes direct, sometimes indirect. They not only praise God, as do psalms of praise and thanksgiving, but like many psalms they "proclaim the wonders He hath done, how His right arm the vict'ry won." In his recent study of the types of psalms Claus Westermann even cites as an example of the type of "descriptive psalms of praise" Luther's "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice."<sup>7</sup>

The advantages of a parish music program which includes the hymn-of-the-week plan are very great. By using such a plan a congregation gradually grows more and more into the church year; the most important hymns of its hymnal are kept alive in its consciousness by being sung and interpreted in a meaningful manner annually; the congregation is also in a measure protected from an all too frequent subjectivism and one-sidedness in the use of its hymnal. Moreover, such a hymn program can be correlated with the hymn singing that is done in meetings of various groups and societies, in the parish education of

<sup>7</sup> Claus Westermann, *Das Loben Gottes in den Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954), p. 82.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 1 ff.

the young, and in the devotions of the home. In this way this program strengthens the bond between private home and public church worship. The church musician is enabled to plan his work far in advance and does not have to wait until shortly before Sunday to find out what hymns will be sung. The church choirs will gradually realize what their position really is. Thus the entire parish music program comes closer to Bach's ideal of being well-ordered church music.

It should not be necessary to point out that if the hymn of the week is introduced in our congregations, this "Gradual hymn" should not displace but should follow the Gradual. The Gradual itself is best sung by the choir.

All practical aspects cannot be dealt with in this paper.<sup>8</sup> Two practical aspects, however, do deserve special consideration, and the last part of this article will deal with them. Closely related to, and almost part of, this recommendation of the hymn-of-the-week plan is the suggestion that these hymns be sung antiphonally. This is the first practical aspect which must briefly be elucidated.

#### ANTIPHONAL HYMN SINGING

At a fairly early period psalms were sung in the church antiphonally, that is, in such a way that two choirs sang alternately,

<sup>8</sup> Practical materials were recently made available for parish use based upon the hymn-of-the-week plan. *Planning the Service*, "A Workbook for Pastors, Organists, and Choirmasters," prepared by Ralph Gehrke (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961). *The Hymn of the Week*, Vols. I—V, edited by Paul Thomas (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961). Modern and old settings for parish choirs in alternating practice with the congregation. *Organ Settings for the Hymn of the Week*, by

thus inciting each other by the reciprocal rhythm of alternate tension and relaxation. In a similar manner in the Reformation age hymns were sung antiphonally between the unison-singing congregation and either a choir singing unison or a choir singing parts in harmony or the organ (organ chorale!). The congregation was thus usually singing every other stanza. When it was not singing, its "partner"—choir or organ—could bring into play the entire treasure of church music in order to unfold and interpret the melody, or *cantus firmus*, and thus interpret the content of the hymn for the hearers. In this way genuinely artistic music becomes an organic part of the divine service; the congregation is drawn into the musicmaking of choir and organ, even as choir and organ by their subjection to the *cantus firmus* of the congregation's hymn show that they know that they are not called independently to lord it over the congregation but rather to serve it in its worship.

This plan gives a definite task to the organ and to instrumental music. And so far as the choir is concerned, it can have no more beautiful task than antiphonal singing, because the choir functions not only as the congregation's "rival," interpreting the Word of God contained in the hymn for the congregation, but also as the congregation's "partner," as its precentor, leader, and teacher, singing out the melodies and in this way contributing much more to the hymn education of the congregation than even the best organ playing can do. By alternate listening and singing the congregation can learn these fine Lu-

Jan Bender (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961). Preludes and varied accompaniments for congregational use.

theran hymns much more easily—even those in the old church modes and those with intricate and varied rhythms. Its attention is focused on the content of the hymn. It can sing all verses of such a great chorale as "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice" without destroying the magnificent unity of its thought by cutting off after four or five stanzas. Moreover, such antiphonal singing will lead the choir away from the mistaken ideal of "beautifying the service" with added selections and will lead it toward the great ideal of performing a genuine service to the congregation as a liturgical group which is ready and happy to help the congregation toward all the blessings of genuine worship.

The goal of antiphonal singing ought to be the singing of all stanzas of the hymn of the week. In the antiphonal treatment of hymns all possible combinations should be exploited (choir alternating with congregation, organ or other instrumental music alternating with congregation, women alternating with men, choir and congregation in unison, alternation by stanzas, alternation by pairs of lines, even alternate singing of stanzas from two different hymns). Unison singing by the choir should not be despised; the goal of having the choir sing every Sunday is impossible in many places if the choir must always sing in parts. What is more important is that the hymn of the week has its regular place in the service every Sunday, even if the choir at first can alternate with the congregation only in unison singing.

An appreciation of, and love for, the best hymns and for the Gospel they proclaim is the primary requisite for introducing antiphonal singing. If such love

and appreciation is present with pastor and church musicians, then it will be fairly easy to lead the congregation in that direction and solve the practical problems, such as how to make the congregation aware of which stanzas of a given hymn it is to sing and which the choir will sing (bulletin, announcement, hymnboard with colored numbers for the stanzas of the hymn to be sung by the congregation antiphonally). The practical problems are not great.

#### ACQUAINTING THE CONGREGATION WITH NEW HYMNS

The second practical aspect that needs attention is one that has perhaps long since been occurring to the reader of this essay. How are you going to acquaint the congregation with these fine but often unknown hymns? This problem must be faced if this plan is to be more than an academic proposal.

In general people do not like to have new hymn tunes "sprung on them" in the service; they perhaps rightly feel that that is not the time or place for a floundering sort of "practicing" of unfamiliar hymns. On the other hand, some "practicing" of unfamiliar hymns is necessary, since it is a tragic fact that many congregations are able to sing only about one fifth of the hymns in the hymnal with complete assurance, and often that one fifth represents hymns of a decidedly sentimental and subjective nature. Some congregations, it is true, still have a living heritage of many fine chorales, but even in their case that treasure must be augmented by many more fine hymns that are not yet well known. And we must face the fact that the old church modes and the varied rhythm of

many chorales pose more problems to the modern congregation than do the flattened-out "measured" melodies of a later age, even though in the end the congregation will learn to love the chorales much more because of their genuine musical verve and superior Gospel preachment. For these reasons those who are responsible for the music in the service, and especially for the selection of the hymns, will have to make special provision if the congregation is to be enabled to sing the finest hymns.

Now, of course, special song services can and should be arranged wherever possible in order to teach the congregation, say, three or four new hymns in a carefully organized and prepared program (which will include an address, perhaps, and various other interesting church music selections). More promising, however, than the institution of such a special song service now and then (which might not reach the entire congregation) would be the utilization of part of the time allotted to the parish's traditional "sacred concerts" or "special services" (such as anniversary services, Christmas concerts, etc.) for the learning of several new congregational hymns. Meetings of the various groups in the congregation offer opportunities for learning the better hymns—in fact, a goal to strive for would be: No meeting without the singing of at least the hymn of the week!

But perhaps the most practical of all methods of acquainting the congregation with the better hymns would be to institute hymn sings at the end of the Sunday service in given periods of the church year. For instance, during Advent in preparation for Christmas, or during the last Sundays in Lent in preparation for Easter, or

during Ascensiontide in preparation for Pentecost. The suggested length for such a hymn sing is ten minutes, no longer! It should begin after the Benediction before the postlude and the dispersing of the people. Naturally the size and situation of each congregation varies, but in the following we are thinking of even a fairly large congregation, where the practicing of hymns is fraught with greater difficulties than in smaller congregations.

Careful preplanning for the hymn sing and prepractice of the new hymn by the leading group (the choir, volunteers from the choir, or if necessary, some other capable group, such as upper-grade school children or the confirmands), is absolutely necessary, as is also the full co-operation of all concerned (pastor, organist, choir director, and leading group). Otherwise the hymn sing will not be effective. Within the congregation there must already have been formed a live "cell" of singers who have mastered the new hymn and are therefore capable of leading the congregation. This cell should ideally include not only "the leading group" but also the school children of the upper grades who have been taught the new hymn and who will be in the church (perhaps even at assigned places) to aid with the "practice."

The leading group should take its place at the front of the church, facing the congregation. After a few brief, well-prepared words of introduction (concerning the general thought of the new hymn, or its relation to the church year, or even perhaps its origin or background), the leading group may sing in unison the entire hymn for the congregation. It may do this, if necessary, antiphonally, alternating between men and women, boys and girls, precentor

and group, right and left, etc. Then the leader (pastor, organist, choir director, or anyone else qualified and called to do so) should ask the congregation to read the first stanza prayerfully together. This serves to impress the text, frees them for more attention later to the melody, loosens up their voices, and lets the foregoing presentation of the hymn impress itself more deeply.

Next, individual units (never less than a whole line and often the first two lines) are sung by the leading group and immediately after repeated by the congregation. If necessary, the leader may ask the congregation to repeat the units twice or even three times. It is imperative that the leading group resist the temptation to sing along with the congregation. That would mislead the congregation to a comfortable dependence on the leading group; also the congregation would in that case not follow so attentively, or put its memory to work so much, because it would know it could depend on the leading group to carry it along. After the first unit has been mastered, the second is attacked in a similar manner. Before, however, proceeding to the third unit, the group should sing the

first two units together. In this manner the entire first stanza is practiced and mastered.

After the first stanza has been sung, a "change of scene" is brought about by the congregation rising; then the leading group sings the entire first stanza, and the congregation answers with the same stanza in exactly the same manner. A word of commendation or encouragement or even a prayer wish, such as "May the Christ Child grant this prayer to every one of us," finishes the practice of the new hymn.

In this manner a new hymn can be learned in, say, six or seven minutes, leaving three or four minutes of the hymn sing for practicing all or part of a recently learned hymn. The plan works best if one starts early and prepares the hymn at least three Sundays before it is sung in the service as the hymn of the week. Then when the hymn is sung on its appointed Sunday, the congregation will be amazed how well it can sing the new hymn. Over a period of five years or six years such a careful program can rejuvenate congregational singing as well as put the entire hymn-of-the-week plan into vital use.

River Forest, Ill.

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## Outlines on the Standard Gospel Series \*

### FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

MATT. 21:1-9

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not; they are new every morning" (Lam. 3:22, 23). This comforting word is particularly meaningful to us today because it assures us that Jesus is ready to bring the mercy of God again throughout this new church year. Let me speak to you this morning about

#### The Comforting Truth That Jesus Will Come in This New Church Year

I direct your attention

I. To Him who will come

II. To those to whom He will come

#### I

A. During the past it seems that the coming of Jesus has been in vain. Very few people received Him. Even we at times turned against Him. Still Jesus does not grow weary of coming.

B. Though our conscience accuses us of many sins, the text pictures Jesus as One

\* EDITORIAL NOTE: As previously announced, the texts of the Standard Gospel Series will be presented during the coming church year. One of the texts for each month will be developed in an exegetical-homiletical form. For the remaining Sundays and festival days, outlines based on C. F. W. Walther's *Evangelien-Postille* will be furnished. The abstracting and translation is done by Prof. Alex W. C. Guebert, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo. The sermon studies are prepared by Pastor Robert H. Smith of the Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Chappaqua, N. Y. The notes on the hymn of the week are by Prof. Robert R. Bergt. For the purpose and use of these hymns see the article in this issue by Prof. Ralph D. Gehrke.

whom we need not fear. He, the *omniscient* God, who knew the thoughts of the people of Bethphage, knows us, our thoughts, our sins, our disappointments, our troubles, sighs, and tears. What a comfort to realize that Jesus knows and is coming to help and sustain, refresh and heal! This Jesus is also the *almighty* God, whose power to help, to forgive sins, and to save cannot be restrained.

C. Therefore every Christian has every reason to shout for joy, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

#### II

A. This coming of Jesus is such a great comfort because it reaches out to the daughter of Zion. The term "daughter of Zion" became the name for the church of the Old and the New Testament. Therefore it is the believers in the true God to whom Jesus is coming.

B. Some of us may not yet be a part of the daughter of Zion. Some of us may not be serious about the Word of grace and the sacraments and so are actually far away from Jesus. But this Jesus who is coming is meek. He wants you. He wants you who forget Him, you who love money and goods more than Him, you who let your flesh deceive you. Let Him comfort you.

C. The portals of the new church year are open before you. Jesus, your King, has come to you through His Word! Arise! Receive Him!

*The Hymn of the Week:* "Savior of the Nations, Come," *The Lutheran Hymnal*, No. 95

Martin Luther's translation, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (printed first in *Eyn Enchiridion*, Erfurt, 1524), of the ancient office hymn *Veni, Redemptor gentium* (one of 12 hymns attributed to St. Ambrose, ca. 340-397), is

aply appointed for the first Sunday of the church year. The full and faithful translation of Luther captures the poetic freshness and vigor of the original. The English translation by William M. Reynolds, 1860, obviously based on the German text, provides a vivacious support of the theme of the day expressed most clearly in the Gospel (Matt. 21:1-9). The version of the translation contained in *The Lutheran Hymnal* is slightly altered.

Martin Luther adapted the melody from an ancient plainsong melody in Mode i, which creates a fitting and strong support for the Christological text. Choral settings by M. Vulpinus and J. S. Bach attest to its greatness; cf. Paul Thomas, ed., *The Hymn of the Week* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961).

## SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

LUKE 21:25-36

The Bible clearly teaches that heaven and earth shall pass away. The Day of Judgment is coming. Though unbelievers ridicule this teaching loudly, reason is conscious not only of change but also of destruction and death of all things. Even heathen authors have written about the end of time. It is wise, therefore, to believe the teaching of the Bible, foolish to reject it.

On the basis of the Gospel for today let me talk to you about

The Folly of Supposing That We Need Not Look Forward to a Judgment Day

This is foolish

- I. *Because of the signs that have already come*
- II. *Because of the condition the world today finds itself in*
- III. *Because of the suddenness with which the Day of Judgment will come.*

### I

A. God has not revealed the date of Judgment Day. Yet He mentions the certainty of its coming in 1 John 2:14; 1 Peter 4:7;

1 Cor. 10:11; James 5:9; Rev. 1:3; Heb. 10:37; 10:25; Phil. 4:5.

B. Signs of its coming have been seen in sun, moon, and stars; in pestilence, famine, and earthquakes; in false prophets, widespread apostasy, and growth of the papacy; in the rise of scoffers within the church.

C. The world pays no attention to these signs. God will call it to account soon. It would be folly for us to ignore these signs. God is using them to call us to repentance and make it possible for us to be saved.

### II

A. The present condition of the world also points up the folly of ignoring Judgment Day. The mad rush for pleasure, the senseless worship at the altar of drunkenness, gluttony, and money are messengers of the coming of Judgment Day (Cf. Luke 17:26-30; 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Peter 3:3-5). Remember the days of Noah and of Sodom and Gomorrah!

B. Because the world is sliding downhill at precipitous speed we dare not stand by and feel that we are secure. Heaven and earth are crying out, "The Judge is standing at the door!" And Satan is exerting all his power to turn men against their Creator. Prepare to receive Jesus with joy when He comes to judge the quick and the dead.

### III

A. It is foolish, furthermore, to ignore Judgment Day, because it will come unannounced. It will come more suddenly than death. No one, not even the Christian, has an inkling of the time when that day will break upon the world. The scoffer will continue to sneer at the Christian: "Stop prattling to me about Judgment Day, hell, and Judgment. That is nothing more than an idle tale preachers have concocted to scare women and children!"

B. While they are yet scoffing, the angels God will sound the trumpets to summon the



living and the dead before God's tribunal. Then woe to the scoffers and all unbelievers! Their lot will be suffering in hell. But for the believer in Christ there will be peace and happiness. Flee in faith into the wounds of Jesus! Continue there! "Watch and pray always that you may stand before the Son of man!"

*The Hymn of the Week:* "The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us," *Lutheran Hymnal*, No. 67

The author of this hymn, Johann Walther, 1496—1570, friend and co-worker of Martin Luther, assisted with the adaptation of ancient melodies for the first Lutheran services of 1523 and 1526 and with the first Lutheran hymnal, *Geystliche gesank Buchlein*, 1524. More distinguished as a musician than as hymnwriter, Walther wrote two hymns which have passed into English translation: *Herzlich lieb hab' ich dich* and *Herzlich tut mich erfreuen, mein Gott*, the latter containing 33 stanzas. Because of the impractical length of the latter, stanzas 31, 8, 9, 16, 18, 17, and 13 were selected in that order and appeared in Melchior Frank's *Rosetulum musicum*, 1628. Stanza 31 begins *Der Bräut'gam wird bald rufen*. The English translation by Matthias Loy, 1880, treats these seven verses. This hymn sets forth the joy of expectation as the Christian awaits the return of the church's victorious Bridegroom.

Originally sung to a melody on "The Joys of Summer" *The Lutheran Hymnal* presently weds this hymn to the tune *Ach Gott vom Himmelreiche*, composed by Michael Praetorius, appearing first in his *Musae Sioniae*, VII, 1609.

### THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

MATT. 11:2-11

The whole world is a magnificent miracle of God. Through sun and stars, wind and clouds, earth and seed, grass, flowers, and trees God is performing new miracles each day. Yet in the strictest sense a miracle is something different from the results we see that grow out of processes at work in nature. A miracle is something God alone can do without using pre-existing material and established natural laws.

Our Gospel for today shows us that Jesus Christ demanded that people believe in Him because of the miracles He performed.

I ask you to let your mind dwell on this point:

The Miracles of Jesus Christ Prove  
Indisputably that He is the Son of God  
and the Savior of the World

Let us

- I. Investigate the power of the proof
- II. Realize that no one has any excuse to offer if he fails to believe in Christ.

#### I

A. If we see any man perform a real miracle, we have reason to believe that he received such power from God. What he does and what he says is something we are bound to accept, because he came direct from God. God cannot and does not practice deceit.

B. When God sent prophets into the world with His message, He endowed them with power to perform miracles. So it was with Moses and other prophets. God expected people to believe what these prophets proclaimed.

C. Christ, very God of very God, performed miracles in His own power. His miracles were not only numerous, they were glorious; His greatest miracle was His resurrection from the dead. (John 2:19; 10:18)

D. Christ's power to perform miracles was unlimited. He drove out evil spirits. He uncovered secret thoughts. He healed people afflicted with all manner of ailments, sicknesses, and diseases. The blind, the deaf, the dumb, the lame, the leper profited from His miraculous touch. Fish, wind, and sea obeyed His command.

E. Though Christ could have used His power to eliminate His enemies, He did not do so. He came as Redeemer to save, to heal, restore and refresh. His miracles con-

vinced many a person, even a man like Nicodemus, that He was the Savior of the world.

## II

A. Because of the miracles Christ performed no man will be able to find any excuse for not coming to faith in Him. No man can doubt the miracles. They have been reported and attested by the most reliable witnesses who did not hesitate to reveal their own weaknesses and sins. Men who are conscience bound to express truth regarding themselves will also express truth regarding others.

B. Christ's miracles were not performed only in the close circle of His friends. Thousands of enemies saw them too. Neither hostile Jews nor unfriendly heathen shouted the apostles down as liars when in their preaching they pointed to the miracles of Christ.

C. Christ not only performed miracles, but also added word to deed. Hence there is no excuse for any one (John 15:24). He declared: "He who sees Me sees the Father; I am the Door; I am the Good Shepherd; I am the Bread of life; I am the Light of the world; He who believes in Me, though He were dead, yet shall He live." He is the Son of God, the Judge of the living and the dead, the only Savior, the One Mediator between God and man, the only name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved. Say with Peter, "We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

*The Hymn of the Week:* "Ye Sons of Men, Oh, Hearken," *The Lutheran Hymnal*, No. 75

When this hymn, *Mit Ernst, o Menschenkinder*, first appeared in 1642 in *Preussische Fest-Lieder*, it was appointed for use on the fourth Sunday in Advent. Later Lutheran practice shifted it to the third Sunday in Advent. Valentin Thilo, 1579-1662, the author of the first three stanzas of this hymn based on Luke 3:4,5, was professor of rhetoric at Königsberg for 28 years. The fourth stanza, obviously not in the style of this professor, was an addendum

from the *Hannoversches Gesangbuch*, 1657. The English translation by Arthur T. Russell, 1851, has been freely altered as it now appears in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. The theme of the hymn underscores the thought of the day, especially related to the Gospel. (Matt. 11:2-10)

The melody to which the hymn is sung, *Aus meines Herzens Grunde*, is of 16th-century secular origin. The author is unknown. It was included in the *Neu Catechismus-Gesangbuchlein* (Hamburg, 1598).

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

JOHN 1:19-28

(A study by Robert H. Smith)

All four of our canonical gospels preface the story of Jesus with an account of John the Baptist. And before we celebrate the joy of Christmas, the church requires that we bend a serious ear to the hard message of John, who called himself a voice crying in the wilderness.

## I

Of all the figures in the N.T. John the Baptist is the oddest and the most eccentric, the sternest and most austere. Sunday school literature ordinarily pictures him as a kind of wild-eyed Tarzan with unkempt hair. He has been described as a man with "no humor, no patience, and a one-track mind," "a great, tall, bony man as wild as a hawk" (Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Man Born to Be King* [London: Victor Gollancz, 1943], pp. 68, 73).

It is a mistake to suppose that he fit into the first century any more comfortably than he fits the 20th. We miss the point entirely if we imagine that in his day lots of people dressed and talked the way he did. That simply is not true. He was out of place as much as a knight in shining armor would be, clanking down the center aisle of a suburban church today, shouting aloud at the top of his lungs.

And the suburban reaction to such an interruption would be comparable to the re-

action of influential Jews to John. At first there might be a chuckle or two at the man in armor, and folks might wonder whether he were insane or playing a practical joke or paying the consequences of some quiz program. But if he persisted, they might become annoyed and lose their tempers with the rude, intruding nuisance.

The official religious leaders among the Jews discovered in John no more than an interesting figure, to say the best. It was naturally quite a delightful novelty to have among them a man who behaved and dressed in the manner and fashion of the great Elijah (cp. Mark 1:6; 2 Kings 1:8; also Zech. 13:4). At first it seemed great sport to listen to his leather-lunged exhortations that conjured up visions of ancient Amos or Isaiah. The religious "big shots" of Jerusalem were for a time amused at the sight of that scrawny, tanned figure dressed in animal skins who subsisted on wild honey and some kind of grasshopper (Mark 1:6). They were disposed to laugh at the crowds of ignorant peasants who chased after John along the lonely banks of Jordan. Many educated, sophisticated Jews paid John no serious attention, but dismissed him with a yawn and half a smile, thinking to themselves, "He's just a harmless preacher, and something of a crank."

But then disturbing reports began filtering back to the officialdom of Jerusalem. John the Baptist was not the flash-in-the-pan they had anticipated. It was impossible to ignore this voice crying in the wilderness as though he were a soapbox orator filled with hot air. The people were genuinely stirred (Mark 1:5). They recognized in John great depths of moral and religious authority (Matt. 14:5). His directness, bluntness, and simplicity moved them and made them see the contrast with the character of their official teachers, the scribes and Pharisees.

John's fearless proclamation of God's will and scathing denunciation of all evil earned

him the admiration of the lower classes and the cordial hatred of the learned and the propertied strata of society (Mark 6:19). He acquired the reputation of a dangerous agitator who had better be dealt with before he caused irreparable damage.

When Herod Antipas had John the Baptist imprisoned in the fortress of Machaerus on the Dead Sea and then executed (Mark 6:17-29), men of wealth and position and religion breathed an audible sigh of relief. They said, "Good riddance," and chalked it up to the public good.

This briefly is the story of John the Baptist. When we read the account from this distance, our first impression may be that he cut a ludicrous figure; but we are quickly impressed by the fire, the flint, and the unflinching passion for righteousness in his personality. And then, although he is far from lovable, we are saddened by the tragedy of his early, unjust end.

## II

The account of the Fourth Gospel presupposes what the synoptic gospels tell us of John the Baptist. That information has been sketched and stretched above. Naturally the question arose, "Who is this man?" This particular story (John 1: 19-28) may have been included by the evangelist partly as a polemic against those who knew only John and his Baptism and valued them too highly, as the disciples of John in Ephesus (Acts 18:25; 19:3, 4). But the story of John stands independent of any polemic; for John the Baptist was designated precursor by Jesus Himself, when He submitted to John's Baptism. That act of Jesus makes John and his testimony significant for us.

### John 1:19-28

V. 19. An official delegation came to interrogate John publicly. As everywhere (70 times) in the Fourth Gospel the antagonists of God's eschatological inbreaking are "the

Jews." "The Jews" (as "the Pharisees") are for John not so much empiric groups as stylized types. They represent that Judaism which rejected Jesus on the basis of the Law. "The Jews" kept the Law and so stand over against "the crowd" (ὁ ὄχλος), the people of the land (the *עַם הָאָרֶץ*, 7:49, etc.). Ultimately the Jews and the world are identical in the Fourth Gospel. The Jews steer men away from Jesus. They make accusations against Him and intimidate those who seem to be gravitating toward Jesus' sphere of influence (5:10 ff.; 7:13; 9:18 ff.; 19:38). Finally they mount an all-out attack on Him leading to the decision to put Him to death as a blasphemer (5:16, 18; 7:1; 10:31-39; see Leonhard Goppelt, *Christentum und Judentum im ersten und zweiten Jahrhundert* [Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1954], pp. 251 ff.).

V. 20. John gave his testimony (μαρτυρία), for which he had been sent (1:7, 8). The sum and substance of the brief exchange with the deputation from the Jews is that John "disowns every kind of movement towards himself" (E. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 2d ed. [London: Faber and Faber, 1950], p. 169). John's witness or confession (ὁμολογία) is a negative one. He tells who he is not.

1. Not the Messianic King. Elsewhere he declares, "I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him." He calls himself the friend of the bridegroom, and says he must decrease as the other increases (3:28 ff.). In his responses John studiously avoids making any claim for himself which could be interpreted Messianically, and he adumbrates the testimony of Paul, who declared that John said, οὐκ εἰμι ἐγώ, "I am not He." (Acts 13:25)

2. Not Elijah. The story of the transfiguration of Jesus shows that Moses and Elijah were popularly associated with the coming of the Messiah. The *locus classicus* for the coming of Elijah is Mal. 4:5, 6: "Be-

hold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes" (cf. 3:1). And the prophecy continues in words picked up by the angelic announcement of the Baptist's birth, "And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers" (cf. Luke 1:17). Jesus recognized the fulfillment of this prophecy in the person and work of John: "He is Elijah who is to come" (Matt. 11:14; cf. 17:13). But John does not presume to seize for himself what Jesus and the angel give him.

3. Not the prophet. Moses had promised the Israelites that "the Lord, your God, will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren — him you shall heed" (Deut. 18:15). Hope in a great eschatological prophet was alive in Judaism (see 2 Esdras 2:18; 1 Maccabees 4:46; 14:41; 2 Macc. 15:15). Jesus, too, was thought by some to be that prophet. (John 6:14; 7:40 and perhaps 7:52; Mark 6:15; 8:28)

V. 22. By his string of denials John exasperates his interviewers. Who are you, then?

V. 23. He describes his person and work with a quotation from Isaiah. In essence John says, "In and of myself I am nothing at all, but I have a divine mission to accomplish." He is a voice crying in the wilderness — his task is preparation by proclamation. He makes propaganda not for himself but for another.

He lifts his voice to speak a word of judgment and a word of hope. To the self-righteous and nomistic Pharisees and Jews John was a scourge. But to the little people, confused and made desperate by a welter of demands unreasonably compounded by their religious leaders, he was a preacher of hope.

In the message and action of John is concentrated all the weight of the prophets' words of repentance and salvation. John is the last great exemplar of O.T. prophecy. "He stands there, an erratic boulder in his

times, over against all Israel, in the solitariness of the literary prophets." (Goppelt, p. 37)

V.24. These Pharisees are most likely members of the Sanhedrin and part of the official delegation sent to question John concerning his all too popular movement.

V.25. If he refuses to make plain, unvarnished statements regarding himself, perhaps he will explain why he is baptizing people. In the LXX O.T. βαπτίζειν (often for כָּבַל) was used of ceremonial washings which cleansed from ritual impurity (Lev. 11:32). Naaman shed his leprosy when he "baptized" himself seven times in the water of Jordan at the direction of Elisha (ἐβαπτίσατο ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ἑπτὰκι, 2 Kings 5:13 f.).

In pre-Christian Judaism the Jews practiced "proselyte Baptism." Heathen converts to Judaism were cleansed from Levitical impurity by a bath. Baptism was thus a rite of purification and initiation into the congregation of Israel.

Two readily observable facts about John's activity brought his Baptism into question.

1. He called on *Jews* to be baptized. What set men's teeth to grinding, what caused their faces to flush with anger and indignation, what crushed hearts with guilt and repentance was the fact that John addressed not the Romans, nor the Greeks, but God's own people, insisting that they needed the cleansing of Baptism. John boldly insisted that the Jews themselves needed the purification which they demanded of Gentile sinners. The late T. W. Manson put it this way, "He had to destroy the confidence that the Messianic hope was a gilt-edged security from which every reasonably good Jew might expect to draw a dividend." (*The Servant-Messiah* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952], p. 47)

2. Those who heeded John's call to repent did not baptize themselves, as in proselyte Baptism, but were passive while John admin-

istered the rite. Hence he earned for himself the title "the Baptist," or "the Baptizer" (ὁ βαπτιστής, ὁ βαπτίζων).

Furthermore John's Baptism was distinguished by the fact that it was completely nonpolitical and nonritual in character. It was strongly ethical in orientation and implication, and it had an indissoluble connection with eschatology. (On proselyte Baptism and John's Baptism see A. Oepke, in Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, I, 532—535)

V.26. As it was different from Jewish baptisms, immersions, and lustrations, so John's Baptism was also distinguished by John himself from the Baptism to be administered in the Messianic era. "I baptize with water" (ἐν ὕδατι, 1:26, 31). The Christ will baptize with the Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι, 1:33, cf. 3:5), which is His alone to give. In other words John's is a Baptism of promise and hope; Christian Baptism is baptism of fulfillment. John's Baptism is a "sealing" in the direction of the coming Messianic time.

V.26. And the One for whom John is making straight the way is already present. He is there unknown and unrecognized by the Jews. It is John's peculiar task to bear witness to Him. (1:6, 7, 15; 3:26)

V.27. John had set himself in magisterial independence above both church and state, defying tetrarch and Pharisee, but he bends his head to the ground before the Messiah. The Baptist would not be displeased with the words of Charles K. Barrett, "John is the spoken word, whereas Jesus is the incarnate Word" (*The Gospel according to St. John* [New York: Macmillan Co., 1956], p. 145). John prepares; Jesus fulfills. John is shadow, Jesus Substance. John is the question, Jesus the Answer.

V.28. The exact location of this Bethany (the other is a suburb of Jerusalem, 11:1, 18) is unknown, but tradition places it some five miles north of the Dead Sea in

the territory of Peraea, which together with Galilee was the Tetrarchy of Herod Antipas, who had John executed.

Everything about John is expectation. He is O. T. prophecy in concentrated dosage. What was unique about him? "John was not the first to preach repentance and moral reformation; he was not the first to make washing a ritual act charged with religious significance; he was not the first to indulge in propaganda concerning the Messiah. But he was the first to bring all three together in an organic unity." (Manson, p. 39)

### III

John's work was making straight the way of the Lord. St. Irenaeus wrote, "As precursor there went before Him John the Baptist, preparing in advance and disposing the people to receive the Word of life, declaring that He was the Christ" (*Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, par. 41). If John were alive today, he would not be a great missionary in heathen parts. He would be a great reformer in so-called Christian places. He would be appalled at the truce which Christians of the 20th century have struck with the world. All too many have managed to reach a dangerous compromise by accepting as par for the course a peaceful coexistence with the evil in the world and the sin in their lives. Humanist and naturalist Joseph Wood Krutch has somewhere crustily observed that it is not at all certain whether in our time more and more people are joining the church or the church is joining more and more people.

And let's not point the finger at others. Let's examine our own entrails. John is a great question mark, writ large over all our lives, calling into question our piety and religiosity. Is our religion more than a sugar coating on the bitter pill life dishes up to us? Is it more than a veneer laid like thin hardwood over a very soft and common core? Are we any better than Pharisee and Sadducee, upon whom John heaped burning

scorn? They believed in their theological system, their rules and regulations. They were smug and confident in their preparedness. They thought their laws, knowledge, ancestry and good deeds were a sufficient asbestos to protect them from the fire of God's wrath and displeasure. If ever we begin to believe in our own respectability, our own deeds of charity, our church attendance, then we are in the same boat with scribe and Pharisee, priest and Levite.

John points us away from a religion of our own invention to the vibrant, beating heart of true religion. A famous painting by the 15th-century artist Matthias Grünewald captures this aspect of John. His altarpiece at Isenheim, Germany, portrays a gaunt-looking John pointing a long arm and bony finger at the figure of Jesus Christ on the cross. "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

#### *John Paves the Way for the Coming of Christ*

- I. John's person seems both ludicrous and tragic. But to laugh him off or merely to shed a sympathizing tear and consider him a hero of old is to miss the point.
- II. John's testimony shatters complacency and smugness then and now.
- III. John's goal is to usher us into the presence of the Messiah.

A. John points to Him, the Lamb of God, sacrificed and offered not for the proud and righteous but for sinners.

B. Christ dwells with sinners. And true religion means not humility alone but decreasing for this purpose, that Christ may increase in us and for us.

*The Hymn of the Week:* "Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel," *The Lutheran Hymnal*, No. 62

An unknown author of the 12th century took five of the original seven "Great Antiphons" and wove them into a hymn, the first line being *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel*. Totally disregarding the

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historical sequence and deleting two antiphons entirely, this unknown author added the refrain not found in the original prose:

*Gaude, gaude, Emmanuel  
Nascetur pro te, Israel.*

John Mason Neale translated this popular hymn version into English in 1851.

The "Great Antiphons" date from the 9th century and were sung before and after the Magnificat, beginning on Dec. 17. The sequence of the antiphons for use at vespers is as follows:

1. *O Sapientia, quae ex ore altissimi . . .*
2. *O Adonay et Dux domus Israel . . .*
3. *O Radix Jesse, qui stas in signum . . .*
4. *O Clavis David et Sceptrum domus . . .*
5. *O Oriens, Splendor lucis aeternae . . .*
6. *O Rex gentium et Desideratus . . .*
7. *O Emmanuel, Rex et Legifer . . .*

The Sarum, York, and Hereford Breviaries add an eighth antiphon:

8. *O Virgo virginum quomodo . . .*

The Sarum Breviary alone adds a ninth antiphon:

9. *O Thoma Didyme, per Christum quem . . .*

The melody *Veni, Emmanuel* is from the 13th century and would be better sung in the pure rhythmically free style of plainsong chant.

Cf. the historical introduction by Arthur C. Piepkorn to Healey Willan, *The Great O Antiphons of Advent*, with Musical Settings (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958).

## CHRISTMAS DAY

LUKE 2:1-14

Millions of people all over the world are streaming into their houses of worship today. Joy is indeed everywhere. Do you know the reason for this joy? A little Babe born at Bethlehem. Although the world does not understand our joy, may God enlighten our eyes and deepen our faith to grasp:

The Unspeakable Importance of the Lowly, Poverty-stricken Birth of the Christ Child

This importance is apparent in

- I. *The noteworthy events that happened in heaven and on earth and are still happening*
- II. *The wonderful union of God and man in this birth accomplished*
- III. *The result this birth achieved*

### I

A. As I speak to you about the importance of the birth of this Christ Child, I realize that I cannot find adequate words to express this mystery. Since my mind cannot reach to its dizzy height or penetrate its unfathomable depth, I can only make some stammering remarks about it.

B. This birth, the birth of the Son of God and the Savior of the world, is radically different from any other birth. The Triune God conceived it in eternity before the world was made.

C. When Adam and Eve fell into sin soon after creation, the birth of the Christ Child was announced in the promise concerning the woman's Seed. From that time on every messenger of God, every patriarch and prophet, as well as the worship in tabernacle and temple and events in the nations of the world, were used by God to pave the way for the coming of the Christ Child.

D. As the time for the birth of this Child drew near, God caused Caesar Augustus to issue a decree to bring Mary to Bethlehem in time for the birth. When the Child was born, God opened the heavens and let a chorus of angels sing the news into the world.

E. This birth has changed the course of the world. Millions have accepted the Child. They have realized that His birth is incomparably, unspeakably great.

### II

A. So far we have stood before the open door of heaven and have made some inquiry

in the world about the birth of this Child. Let us now enter the stable for an understanding of the Child. Through His birth God and man are united. God became man, and man became God!

B. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." Not even the angels understood this mystery as they sang, "Glory to God in the highest!" How do the other wonders of God compare with this wonder, "The Word was made flesh"? Where is the language that can express the importance of this birth adequately?

### III

A. A wise man who spends huge sums of money on extensive plans has a great goal in mind. No one is wiser than God. In sending His Son into the world as a little Child at such a tremendous cost, God achieved incalculably great results: glory for Himself, peace on earth, and good will among men.

B. Through the birth of the Christ Child God uncovered His heart of love. Thereby He gives us mansions in heaven, grants us eternal peace before His throne, clothes us in brilliant garments of righteousness, makes us His own special children, raises us into the royal nobility of heaven.

C. Since the Christ Child has come in the flesh, every human being can say: "God's Son is my Brother. God is also my Friend. He is gracious to me. He must want me to believe that He is my Father and that I am

His child." With His eyes directed to Bethlehem, God is still calling down from heaven, "Come, you who are thirsty! Come and take the water of life freely."

*The Hymn of the Week:* "All Praise to Thee, Eternal God," *The Lutheran Hymnal*, No. 80

Martin Luther gave birth to one of his simplest and yet most profound poetic expressions in the hymn *Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ*, 1524. He based the first stanza upon the sequence

*Grates nunc omnes reddamus Domino Deo,  
qui sua civitate nos liberavit de diabolica  
potestate.*

*Huic oportet ut canamus cum angelis  
semper:*

*Gloria in excelsis.*

The author of this sequence may have been either Richard the Monk or Robert of Winchester. Both claim authorship in manuscripts from the 12th century. It has also been erroneously ascribed to Notker Balbulus and St. Gregory the Great. To this stanza already popularized in German, ca. 1370, Luther added six original stanzas, all of which conclude with *Kyrieleyis*. Only five stanzas are found translated into English in the *American Sabbath Hymn Book*, 1858. The translator is unknown. This same translation of *The Lutheran Hymnal* catches but a few of the paradoxes which appear in every stanza of Luther's original. Someone has described this hymn as "the blessings of the birth of Christ in paradoxes." It rehearses the Epistle, Titus 2:11-14, and announces the Gospel for Christmas Day, Luke 2:1-14.

The melody *Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ* is from the plainsong, ca. 1400. The composer is anonymous. It was adapted in Wittenberg, ca. 1524. Its flavor is both like that of a carol and a chorale, which befits the similar character of the text.



## THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE WORD OF GOD

Under this title the *Scottish Journal of Theology* (March 1961), among other things, compares the Fundamentalist view of the Bible with that of the Liberal approach. It says that while the Fundamentalist tries to safeguard his view of verbal inspiration by doctrines of absolute inerrancy and historical and scientific infallibility, and so on, the value of this positive approach must nevertheless be recognized, since it emphasizes the *objective authority* of the Bible, an authority which, rightly understood as interpreted by the Holy Spirit, can be relied on as an infallible guide to faith and life. The Liberal approach is very different. While it does not deny the authority of the Bible, rightly understood, as a rule for faith and life, its emphasis rests upon the human, historical side of the composition of its literature. Another aspect of the Liberal approach is its tendency to pick and choose bits here and there in the Bible as edifying and to dismiss the rest. Thus John Baillie was ready to agree that 1 Corinthians 13 is verbally inspired, but that quite clearly the Bible as a whole is not. The chief danger of the Liberal approach, however, is its *subjectivity*. If the Bible only in parts contains the Word of God and in others speaks with a fallible human voice, who is to judge what is the Word of God and what is not? If the Bible is not infallible and inspired except in parts, where is its authority to be found? The writer then quotes Gabriel Hebert, who in his work *Fundamentalism and the Church of God* (Student Christian Movement Press, 1957) says:

A theory has been held in recent years that the Revelation consists essentially in the acts of God Himself . . . and that the books of the Bible contain the human record of these things, as described by faithful but fallible

men. In this view the Bible, consisting of "words of men," is no more than a human record and commentary on God's mighty acts of salvation. . . . But what has happened to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit? The implication is that in the events recorded in the New Testament God sent His Son and in Him revealed His glory, and then left us to trace out according to our poor notions the works of His mighty wisdom. . . . But this separation between the Word of God and the words of men simply will not do. It is to make a separation between the Son of God and the Spirit.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

### THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON IN THE LUTHERAN DOGMATICIANS

In the publication of our Springfield seminary, *The Springfielder* (spring 1961), Prof. J. A. O. Preus presents a most scholarly, well-documented, interesting, and timely article on this greatly neglected and also greatly debated subject. Professor Preus reaches the conclusion that four criteria of canonicity appear in the thinking of the dogmaticians: (1) content, (2) apostolic authorship or supervision, (3) the use of the book in the early history of the church, and (4) inspiration. The dogmaticians all use these criteria so that actually there is not such a great difference among them as would first appear. Luther emphasized content more than the other criteria and more than the dogmaticians did. Chemnitz perhaps more strongly than any other emphasized apostolic authorship, yet he adds inspiration as one of the prime criteria of canonicity. The later dogmaticians emphasized the criterion of inspiration more than some of the other criteria and more than did the early dogmaticians. Yet it was by no means their only emphasis. The difference among the dogmaticians was not one of exclusiveness but

one of emphasis. They were all basically agreed as to what made a book canonical and as to which books were Scripture. The position of the Lutheran dogmaticians, while differing in emphasis, indicates a likeness of thought. All agreed that the Canon was made up of books that were inspired, written by apostles, known and witnessed in the early church, and containing divine and evangelical teaching. The dogmaticians teach us two things: (1) the Canon, viewed as a list of books by a definitely known group of authors, is not an article of faith; (2) we need have more of the dogmaticians' reverence for Scripture as a God-breathed, authoritative Word, which we recognize on the basis of its authorship, human and divine, its content, and the history of its use through the ages of the church.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

#### AMERICAN FREEDOM AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

*Church and State* (May 1961) discusses under this heading the relation of our American tradition of freedom to the Christian faith. The article contains vital statements which merit widespread consideration, as a few quotations will show.

It is evident that from the beginning of our national history Christian ideas have played an important role in the development of the American tradition of freedom. It is necessary only to recall the contributions of the Puritans and Roger Williams in the foundation of American freedom to give some indication of this influence. Yet it is also evident that the American tradition of freedom is not essentially Christian. Because of the close relationship of Christian ideas to the development of democracy in America there is a tendency to associate these two elements uncritically, thus identifying the Christian faith with observable weaknesses in the democratic process. It is more accurate to say that the Christian contribution is secondary, the more direct influence being the rationalistic humanism of classical Greek

thought and the Enlightenment, which continues as the dominant element of the American democratic faith. It is the problems in this philosophy which primarily lead to the problems of the American idea of freedom. . . . From the Christian point of view the humanistic basis for freedom is inadequate in at least two points. First, it involves an unrealistic estimate of human nature, the emphasis on the essential goodness of man. The uncritical acceptance of this view in American life led to vast abuses associated with unregulated capitalism in the past and is the root of a naive faith of some in the "social planning" in our day. In both cases the assumption is that men will put the general welfare above selfish motives. . . . Again, the humanist position fails to furnish a sufficient moral ground for the application of the idea of freedom. By its very nature humanism involves ethical relativity in that there is no ground beyond human reason to which to appeal. . . . If ideas of freedom are based primarily on humanistic assumptions their dynamic will be ultimately dissipated in intellectual confusion and moral uncertainty.

The writer adds that the "Christian contribution to the development of human freedom has been to provide moral certainty and spiritual dynamic. . . . It is not surprising that those areas of the world where the greatest progress has been made in human freedom are those in which the Christian ideal has most deeply penetrated."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

#### DOES THE CHEIROGRAPHON OF COL. 2:14 REPRESENT CHRIST HIMSELF?

Under this heading the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (July 1961) discusses this question, which has been raised in more recent times on the basis of the *Odes of Solomon* (*Ode XXIII*), which, as has been suggested, evidences "a Jewish-Christian exegesis of St. Paul's cheirograph." If the *cheirographon* does represent Christ, inasmuch as He is the Revelation of the Father, then, the writer

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holds, we have a much easier reading for our verse than the classical exegesis will allow, for Christ was literally nailed to the cross. Fundamentally, *cheirographon* means "written with the hand," or more technically, a "certificate of debt." Classical exegesis refers the cheirograph to the Mosaic Law. The cheirograph thus represents a certificate of debt resulting from our transgressions. By our sins we had violated the precepts of the divine Law, and so we had become insolvent debtors, because we were incapable of procuring adequate compensation for our debt. The precepts of the Law were an accusation before the divine tribunal, calling down upon us punishment. On the cross Christ annihilated the certificate of our debt by nailing it to the cross. The debt is annulled with regard to the "ordinances" of the divine Law so that they can no longer condemn us. Such is the conservative classical exegesis of the cheirograph.

The champions of the so-called Jewish-Christian exegesis (Battifol, Daniélou, and others) regard Christ Himself as the *cheirographon* inasmuch as He is the new Revelation, or the Word of God come down upon earth. The cheirograph would thus stand for the condemnation which was upon us because of our sins. This thought is in line with St. Paul's statements that Christ was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21); that He became a curse for us (Gal. 3:13), and others. The undersigned still prefers what the article calls the "classical exegesis," but the second view is also interesting, though in the last analysis both pronounce the same Gospel truth of Christ's redemption.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

#### MORALITY OF NUCLEAR WAR

The final number of Volume III (July 1961) of *Militärseelsorge*, the admirably edited quarterly of the West German Roman Catholic military ordinariate, includes an article on "Christian Morality and Atomic

Weapons" by two Münster theologians, Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde and Robert Spaemann. The authors summarize in the following theses the conclusions that they are compelled to draw from contemporary Roman Catholic teaching on war as derived from papal pronouncements and the reflections of modern moral theologians:

"(1) Modern warfare has not yet reached the stage where it is morally impermissible in itself.

"(2) The licitness of a war of defense in itself does not simultaneously establish the licitness of all the means of defense that a situation may require; there is no *absolute* right of defense.

"(3) The principle that we must weigh values against one another (*Güterabwägung*) leads to the conclusion that it is not permissible to counter a conventional attack with an atomic counterattack, as well as to the further conclusion that an atomic counterattack is not permissible when it can no longer serve the ends of protection or defense, but serves merely to visit upon the enemy the same evil that he has visited upon us.

"(4) There is disagreement on how far the principle that requires restriction of the consequences of warfare to combatants (controllability) warrants the conclusion that atomic weapons are impermissible; very many bishops and theologians adopt the conclusion as far as H-bombs are concerned and a majority do so as far as 'ordinary' atomic weapons are concerned.

"(5) [Roman] Catholic teaching on war obligates all concerned to observe the international law that is in effect. The current requirements of international law unexceptionally forbid the use of atomic weapons in the face of a conventional attack; in the face of an atomic attack such a counterattack with atomic weapons is justifiable as a means of self-preservation." (Pp. 296, 297)

ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN

# BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

*New York.*—Membership of the Lutheran churches in North America totaled 8,456,863 adults and children at the end of 1960. The Lutheran bodies reported 8,188,289 baptized members in the United States and 268,574 members for their affiliated groups in Canada, according to the annual statistical summary issued here by the National Lutheran Council. The figures were compiled by Miss Helen M. Knubel, secretary of research and statistics in the council's Division of Public Relations.

The total represents a gain of 143,015 members, or 1.7 per cent, during 1960—133,872 in the U.S. and 9,143 in Canada. The percentage of increase is considerably below the average gain of 3.1 per cent over the past ten years, when increases in membership ranged from 2.7 to 3.6 per cent.

Composing the third largest Protestant denominational grouping in America, the Lutheran churches are exceeded in numbers only by the Baptists and Methodists.

The NLC's summary is based on statistics supplied by 14 Lutheran church bodies. Eight of the bodies recorded advances in membership, two reported no change, and four suffered losses.

The six bodies that participate in the National Lutheran Council—United, American, Augustana, Lutheran Free, Suomi Synod, and American Evangelical—have 5,566,932 members, a gain of 83,559 over the previous year. The Synodical Conference, which consisted of the Missouri Synod, Wisconsin Synod, Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and Evangelical Lutheran Synod, with Negro Missions—has 2,864,141 members, or 60,149 more than in 1959. Four independent bodies—National Evangelical, Finnish Apostolic, Lutheran Brethren, and Eilsen Synod—total 25,790 members, a loss of 693.

The gain in baptized membership of

143,015 in 1960, distributed among the 18,118 congregations, marks an average increase of 7.8 new members per local church, compared with the average of 12.5 for the previous decade. Confirmed or adult membership advanced by 104,903 to a grand total of 5,557,729, a gain of 1.9 per cent. This would indicate an average accession of 5.7 adult members per congregation in 1960, somewhat less than the average of 6.8 over the past ten years.

For the 16th consecutive year the highest numerical increase was made by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as it accounted for 57 per cent of all the new members reported. Among the major bodies, it also showed for the third year in a row the greatest gain on a percentage basis. The Missouri Synod added 81,744 baptized members, or 3.4 per cent, to boost its total membership to 2,469,036. Over the past 16 years it has gained 1,028,665 members, an average of 64,292 annually. The synod is the second largest Lutheran body in America and one of three with more than two million members each.

The top-ranking United Lutheran Church in America reported a net increase of 17,997, or 0.7 per cent, and now has 2,495,009 members. The ULCA is scheduled to merge next year with Augustana, Suomi, and the AELC into a new denomination of more than three million members to be known as the Lutheran Church in America.

Third largest of the bodies, the new American Lutheran Church, which began operations this year after a three-way merger, has 2,306,780 members, a gain of 49,611, or 2.1 per cent, over the separate figures reported last year by the former ALC, Evangelical Lutheran Church, and United Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The greatest gain percentagewise of any body, regardless of size, was registered by the Lutheran Free Church. It showed an

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increase of 3,654, or 4.4 per cent, and now has 87,250 members. The LFC has authorized a referendum in its congregations next fall on the question of affiliation with the new ALC.

Second highest percentage was compiled by the National Evangelical Lutheran Church with a gain of 421 members, or 3.8 per cent, to 11,397. The NELC this year took steps expected to lead to merger with the Missouri Synod in 1963.

In the field of parish education, the churches enrolled 4,065,106 pupils, 23,199 more than in 1959. Sunday schools gained 5,416 pupils, vacation Bible schools 5,755, released-time schools 1,515, and parochial schools 10,513.

Sunday schools had 2,667,474 pupils in 17,683 schools served by 323,764 teachers; vacation Bible schools had 1,087,977 pupils in 8,128 schools with 115,268 teachers; released-time schools had 121,003 pupils in 1,562 schools with 8,653 teachers; and parochial schools had 188,652 pupils in 1,632 schools with 7,504 teachers.

Most of the parochial or Christian day schools are conducted by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with 1,293. The Wisconsin Synod has 221 schools, the American Lutheran Church 50, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod 13, the United Lutheran Church 10, the National Evangelical Lutheran Church 3, the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches 2, the Eilsen Synod 1, and the Negro Missions 39. Last year the Augustana Lutheran Church listed two parochial schools, but this year reported that no figures were available.

Last year the former ELC also reported 38 such schools, the ALC 90, and the UELC 3 for a total of 131. This year the merged ALC lists only 50 schools but with an increase of 849 teachers and 2,364 pupils for a total of 1,230 teachers and 10,477 pupils. Apparently many schools in areas

with more than one congregation have been consolidated since the merger.

The number of ordained Lutheran pastors rose to 18,796, an increase of 373 over 1959. Of these, 13,717 or 160 more than the previous year were serving in pastorates during 1960.

Congregations totaled 18,118, a net gain of 160 compared to 244 in 1959. Preaching places showed a sharp decrease of 534 and now number 211, a drop explained by the fact that the Missouri Synod inadvertently included South American preaching places in its report for 1959.

In congregational finances, expenditures by the churches for their own activities increased by \$13,088,526, compared to \$6,708,706 in 1959, to a total of \$332,992,610. Contributions to church work at large showed a gain of \$4,499,101, compared to \$1,313,370 the previous year, and reached \$82,069,447. Total expenditures amounted to \$415,062,057, a gain of \$17,587,627 over 1959. This was more than twice the increase of \$8,022,121 in that year and a little more than two thirds the increase reported in 1958.

A separate compilation of statistics for the Lutheran churches in Canada, included in the foregoing figures, revealed that Canada has 268,574 baptized members and 167,218 confirmed or adult members. They are served by 1,057 congregations and 55 preaching places. The clerical roll consists of 691 pastors, of whom 545 are serving congregations.

*Geneva.*—The Lutheran World Federation Broadcasting Service and sponsors of the International Lutheran Hour have signed an agreement for "co-operation in radio evangelism in Africa and Asia." Under the agreement, programs of the Lutheran Hour—which is the largest nonstate religious broadcasting operation in the world—will be put on the air from the federation's 100-kilowatt short-wave "Voice of the Gospel"

radio station now being constructed at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

For its part the Lutheran Hour organization will contribute at least \$50,000 toward the original capital cost of the station by the end of 1962 and annual sums to its operating budget in proportion to its share in the station's Lutheran broadcasts. The Lutheran Hour, which regularly airs religious programs in more than 50 languages to people in over 115 lands, is sponsored by the Lutheran Laymen's League of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, with headquarters at Saint Louis, Mo. The 2,469,000-member Missouri Synod is the largest Lutheran church body in the world not affiliated with the LWF.

Action of the federation's representatives in entering into the pact with the Lutheran Hour sponsors was ratified by the LWF Executive Committee at Warsaw on July 1. Under its terms Lutheran Hour programs "will be identified as such," but their number and kind are to be determined by the LWF Broadcasting Service in consultation with LH officials "on the basis of programing strategy and need." Moreover, "to encourage and strengthen Lutheran broadcast-ing over local stations, the LH indicates its willingness to share financially in the local Lutheran radio broadcasts of participating national churches which are unable to under-write the total costs immediately." It was agreed that "such support shall be determined on the basis of individual requests forwarded through, and approved by, the LWF/BS and contingent upon LH approval of the programing material to be employed."

The agreement was drafted at federation headquarters here in June 1960. Signing for the LWF were its then Executive Secretary Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist, Director Arne Sovik of the Department of World Mission, and Director Sigurd Aske of the Broadcasting Service. Signatories for the Lutheran Hour were Executive Director Paul Friedrich of the Lutheran Laymen's League and Di-

rector C. Thomas Spitz, Jr., of the Hour's foreign operations—both of St. Louis.

*Warsaw.*—After three years of discussion, the Lutheran World Federation Executive Committee chose here the motto "Christ Today" for the federation's Fourth Assembly at Helsinki. The assembly will take place from July 30 to Aug. 11, 1963.

Theme discussions at the gathering in Finland are to deal with "the relationship between the doctrine of the justification of the sinner for Christ's sake and the life of service of the individual Christian and of the Church."

About 700 delegates, official visitors, LWF staff members and press correspondents are expected to attend the 1963 gathering, with unofficial visitors estimated at more than 5,000.

The committee here voted to publish at the time of the assembly an enlarged directory of world Lutheranism, including statistical and historical information such as that contained in the formerly issued Lutheran world almanacs. It decided also that systematic Bible studies related to the assembly theme should be based on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians and that they should be distributed to member churches for their wide use beginning a year before the assembly.

*Washington, D. C.*—Lutheran ministers engaged in welfare chaplaincy work number 364. According to a report issued here by the Rev. Carl R. Plack, 301 of these are full-time chaplains. The other 63 perform ministerial functions in welfare agencies or institutions in addition to duties as parish pastors.

Of the full-time chaplains, Mr. Plack said, 190 are from churches which participate in the National Lutheran Council, 108 from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and 3 from the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Mr. Plack is secretary for chaplaincy services in the NLC's Division of Welfare.



The statistics were made available from a roster of Lutheran chaplains compiled by the NLC chaplaincy services' office for the use of church bodies and individuals interested in the total picture of Lutherans' contribution to nonmilitary chaplaincy services in America.

*Helsinki, Finland.* — One of the major results of the annual meeting here of the Commission on Theology of the Lutheran World Federation was the development of plans for the publication of studies in such areas as the coming Ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church, pulpit and altar fellowship, the validity of the Lutheran Confessions, and other questions of doctrine and practice.

Announced at the commission meeting was the forthcoming publication of a volume on "The Gospel and the Ecumenical Council." The book, produced by a team of Lutheran scholars of Roman Catholic doctrine, will evaluate the coming Vatican council and its importance for Protestants. This will be the first published material from the LWF's Commission on Interconfessional Research. Edited by Dr. K. E. Skydsgaard, the volume will have contributions from American theologians Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan of the University of Chicago and Dr. George Lindbeck of Yale.

In addition, two other studies are being readied for publication by the Commission on Theology before the fourth assembly of the LWF in Helsinki in August 1963. One of the studies will deal with the validity of the Lutheran Confessions, and the other will discuss the present position of Lutherans on the question of pulpit and altar fellowship. Both volumes will outline the present attitudes of the various Lutheran church bodies

throughout the world and will give an overall picture of the churches in regard to these issues, which have been matters of discussion and dispute. In each case a team of scholars are at work preparing the material.

The Americans involved in the study of the place and use of the Lutheran Confessions are: Dr. Eugene Fevold, professor of church history, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., and Dr. Robert Fischer, professor of church history, Chicago Lutheran Seminary, Maywood, Ill. Dr. Fred Meuser, professor of church history at the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio, will be engaged in work on the volume concerning the question of pulpit and altar fellowship.

The Commission on Theology is also preparing material for discussion by the next assembly of the LWF in Helsinki. It is expected that the commission's studies on the nature of the Lutheran World Federation and on the doctrine of justification will evoke considerable discussion. It is planned that this material, along with a report on the work of the Commission on Theology, will be in the hands of the member churches of the LWF in advance of the next assembly so that there will be serious study of the material prior to the assembly itself.

*Tyler, Minn.* — The American Evangelical Lutheran Church at its 84th annual convention here became the fourth and last church body to complete favorable action on a merger that will establish a new denomination of more than three million members. On the third day of its sessions, Aug. 15—20, the AELC voted 260 to 7 to join with the United, Augustana, and Finnish Evangelical (Suomi Synod) Lutheran churches in forming the Lutheran Church in America.



## BOOK REVIEW

*All books reviewed in this periodical may be procured from or through Concordia Publishing House, 3558 South Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis 18, Missouri.*

**THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.** By Bernard Ramm. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960. 140 pages. Cloth. \$3.00.

In this short volume Ramm offers a discussion of the contemporary relevance of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. He feels that one basic cleavage between Rome and Protestantism centers in the fact that Rome has failed to appreciate the position of the Reformers on just this point. For Protestantism does not merely set the authority of the Bible against the authority of the church. Orthodox Protestantism refuses to separate the Spirit from the Word of God.

Ramm points out, however, that the testimony of the Spirit in subsequent history sometimes suffered a shrinkage, and he is particularly right when he says it became a mere validation without proper regard to Christ or salvation. The author insists that the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christology necessarily relate to the testimony of the Spirit as presuppositions. And he maintains that the *testimonium* is a revelation, what he calls the innerside or underside of revelation.

Very useful is his discussion of μαρτύριον, based largely on the Strathmann's article in Kittel. Two facts are brought out in the discussion: (1) the witness is true in the sense of being factual, and (2) at the same time it is not capable of rational verification, but can be received only by faith.

In his final chapter Ramm returns to his dispute with Rome, which, he says, fears the inner testimony of the Spirit. To Rome this testimony is subjectivism, but, says Ramm, only because Rome separates the witness of the Spirit from the Word of God and denies

that faith is above reason. The author also rightly finds fault with Pascal and Kierkegaard for displacing the *testimonium* with an existential substitute. ROBERT PREUS

**THE WANDERING SAINTS OF THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES.** By Eleanor Shipley Duckett. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1959. 319 pages. Cloth. \$5.00.

This is one of the finest presentations of early medieval missions of which we know. Eleanor Duckett, professor of classics at Smith College for many years, has successfully captured the spirit of the age and especially of its missionary concerns.

She states that she is striving for the "middle way" between popular narratives about the saints and scholarly monographs on the subject. There are no footnotes, and they are not needed. It is quite obvious to anyone familiar with the documents of the period that the author is working directly from the contemporary chronicles, letters and lives of the saints, with the acumen of a critical historian. At the same time, the reader is allowed to see the great themes and movements of the period as interpreted by a scholar with deep appreciation and splendid insight.

The book tells the story of the early mediev-als who wander just to be on the road, alone, and at prayer; of those who went out expressly to convert the heathen; and also of those whom we call pilgrims. It is regrettable that the author leaves out the story of Augustine and Theodore of Canterbury, since they would certainly fit into her scheme and since their omission leaves a brilliant aspect of the story untold here.

This work shows once again that the period from the sixth to the ninth century when the Christian Gospel, in a form peculiar to the period, was spread among the people of England and northwest Europe, certainly cannot be called a dark age.

At the end of the book there are excellent bibliographical materials for each chapter.

WALTER W. OETTING

#### THE WORD FOR THIS CENTURY.

Edited by Merrill C. Tenney. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960. xv and 184 pages. Cloth. \$4.00.

This symposium commemorates the 100th anniversary of the founding of Wheaton College, always a citadel of conservative Reformed Protestantism and in recent years one of the centers of the post-Fundamentalist theological revival. The nine participants in this symposium are described as "representative members" of the school's administration (President V. Raymond Edman; Dean Tenney), faculty (Kenneth S. Kantzer), and alumni (Carl F. H. Henry, Stuart Cornelius Hackett, T. Leonard Lewis, Billy Graham, Glenn W. Barker, and John F. Walvoord). The themes are those that one would expect—sin, the authority of the Bible, the person of Christ, redemption, Christ in the believer, the church, Christian ethics, the eschatological hope. The volume is a useful indicator of the direction that the type of theology for which Wheaton stands is taking.

ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN

*DAS HISTORISCHE PROBLEM DES LEBENS JESU.* By Hans-Werner Bartsch. München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1960. 31 pages. Paper. DM 2.00.

In this essay Bartsch meets head on the easy theological optimism of those who claim that the history of Jesus of Nazareth is irrelevant for theology by pointing out that the early church's recognition of an historical person as Redeemer was in marked contrast

with the mystery cults and their myths which isolated ideas from history. The history of Jesus and His proclamation, insists Bartsch, is not merely a presupposition for the New Testament proclamation (*pace* Bultmann) but is declared by the apostolic proclamation to be itself constitutive of that proclamation. Thus there is established a continuity between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of New Testament faith. The proclamation of the church includes the testimony that before Easter the church failed to understand the call to decision. Now in her persecuted situation she sees that humiliation is the true mark not only of her own theological existence but also of the Christ who suffered in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. By admitting her earlier failure to recognize Jesus as the Christ, the church not only removes for itself the offense of the Cross but also bridges the gap between Good Friday and Pentecost, which prompts the perennial quest for the historical Jesus. In this testimony of the church, imbedded in her proclamation, of which the gospels are partial documentation, we can locate the criteria for isolating scientifically verifiable data in the Gospel accounts, but only in larger outlines. Among these ingredients is the substance of Jesus' proclamation in Mark 1:15. Mark documents the church's confession that her proclamation is identical with, and rooted in, the proclamation of Jesus.

The best commentary on Bartsch's text is Heinz Tödt, *Der Menschensohn in der Synoptischen Überlieferung* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1959). Bartsch asserts that Jesus' own self-understanding is theologically irrelevant (p. 29). But Bartsch lays much stress on the call to discipleship, and certainly the call to decision pronounced by Jesus implies something regarding His self-understanding. His self-understanding is therefore an aspect of the problem which requires much further exploration.

FREDERICK W. DANKER

**DIE CHRISTOLOGIE IN LUTHERS LIEDERN.** By Klaus Burba. Gütersloh: Carl Bertelsmann Verlag, 1956. 72 pages. Paper. DM 5.80.

Although it takes up Luther's hymns, this Münster dissertation, published in the series *Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte*, is a piece of systematic rather than hymnological research. Burba elucidates Luther's hymns in approximately chronological sequence at the hand of the great Reformer's sermons and in terms of the march of historical developments in the Reformation. In the process he discovers some interesting linkages that cast significant light on the meaning of many of Luther's hymns. One might dissent in some details, and one might object that Burba's categories are sometimes Procrustean and his treatment of the hymns uneven. But he has abundantly established his major theses, that the thrust of Luther's hymns is consciously antipiritualist and anti-Sacramentarian and that they voice a profoundly Christocentric, soteriologically oriented, sacramental, incarnational faith.

ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN

**LUTHER'S WORKS.** Edited by Helmut T. Lehmann. Vol. 34: *Career of the Reformer, IV*. Edited by Lewis W. Spitz, Jr. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960. 387 pages. Cloth. \$5.00.

In the terms of the admirable introduction with which brilliant Renaissance and Reformation scholar Spitz has prefaced this final volume of the "Career of the Reformer" unit, it is the all too often neglected "Lu-

theran Luther" of the years after 1530 who speaks and writes on these pages—the confessor, the university professor, the controversialist, the patriarch of the Reformation movement. We have the *Exhortation to All Clergy Assembled at Augsburg* (1530), the *Commentary on the Alleged Imperial Edict* (1531), *Theses Concerning Faith and Law* (1535), the two 1536 disputations concerning man and justification respectively, *The Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Church* (1538), the *Counsel of a Committee of Several Cardinals*, with Luther's preface and his sarcastic marginal glosses (1538), his preface to Galeatius Capella's *History* (1538), the 1539 preface to the Wittenberg edition of his collected German works, his will of 1542, the licentiate examination of Henry Schmedenstede of Lüneberg (1542), and finally, out of 1545, Luther's autobiographically important preface to the Wittenberg edition of his collected Latin works, his savage theses *Against the Thirty-Two Articles of the Louvain Theologians*, and *An Italian Lie Concerning Dr. Martin Luther's Death*, with Luther's own cheerful acknowledgment. The whole volume, almost without exception, makes uncommonly interesting reading, partly because of the intrinsic significance of the contents, but not a little because of the editor's excellent introductions, the judicious annotations, and the smooth English of the brand-new translations (eight by the editor, two by his able theologian-father, and four by the University of California's Robert R. Heitner).

ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

(The mention of a book in this list acknowledges its receipt and does not preclude further discussion of its contents in the Book Review section)

*Out of the Earth: The Witness of Archaeology to the New Testament.* By E. M. Blaiklock. Second Edition. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961. 92 pages. Cloth. \$2.00. In the first

edition (1957) of this engaging little work the Professor of Classics at the University of Auckland summarizes what archaeology has to say about Christ's birth, sayings, death, and resurrection, about the Acts of the Apostles,

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the New Testament epistles, and the Revelation, and about the early church. The present edition involves a revision and expansion of every chapter except one and the addition of a new section on the relation of the Gospel of Thomas to the sayings of Jesus. All in all, this makes an excellent little introduction to New Testament archaeology.

*The Gist of the Bible Book by Book.* By Alvin E. Bell. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961 [c. 1926]. 169 pages. Paper. \$1.50. A photolithoprinted reissue of the original 1926 Harper & Brothers edition.

*The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.* By Heinrich Schmid; tr. from the German and the Latin by Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs. Third edition. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961. 692 pages. Cloth. \$4.75. For almost three generations this translation has been an all but indispensable reference tool of the English-speaking Lutheran pastor for obtaining a dependable overview of the classic formulations of his denomination's systematized theology. The publisher has put the Lutheran Church of this country and the commonwealth deeply into his debt by making this standard work, last published in 1899 and long to be had only at premium prices in the secondhand book market, available at so modest a cost. If your library does not yet include it, order it at once.

*The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons.* By J. W. Powell. New York: Dover Publications, 1961. 400 pages. Paper. \$2.00. An unabridged and unaltered photolithoprinted reissue of a classic story of scientific adventuring, originally published in 1895 as *Canyons of the Colorado*.

*Joseph the Prime-Minister.* By William M. Taylor. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961. 241 pages. Cloth. \$2.95. A photolithoprinted reissue of the original 1886 Harper & Brothers edition.

*Thomas Aquinas: Providence and Predestination,* translated by Robert W. Mulligan. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961. xxxi and 154 pages. Paper. 95 cents. This

title presents two questions from St. Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, the fifth on providence, the sixth on predestination, from Mulligan's excellent English translation put out by the same publisher under the title *Truth* in 1953. The translator's introduction to this excerpt, despite its succinctness, is admirably clear and competent.

*Moses the Law-Giver.* By William M. Taylor. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961. 482 pages. Cloth. \$2.95. A photolithoprinted reissue of the original 1886 Harper & Brothers edition.

*Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social and Political Thought.* Edited by Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall. New York: Macmillan Company, 1961, xiv and 486 pages. Paper. \$1.95. A paperback reissue of an important guide to the thought of a major American theological voice. The original edition appeared in 1956 and was reviewed in this journal, Vol. XXVIII, 951, 952.

*The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede (Von Reimarus zu Wrede).* By Albert Schweitzer; translated by W. Montgomery; edited by F. C. Burkitt. New York: Macmillan Company, 1961. viii and 413 pages. Paper. \$1.95. This 55-year-old study, Schweitzer's first important book, more than any other single work gave a new direction to the eschatological thinking of Protestantism. The present volume is an unaltered paperback reissue of the English translation of 1910.

*Audubon and His Journals.* By Maria R. Audubon and Elliott Coues. New York: Dover Publications, 1960. Paper. Vol. I: xiv and 532 pages, \$2.00; Vol. II: viii and 566 pages, \$2.00. An unabridged and unaltered paperback reissue of the edition published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1897; it includes the European (1826-1829), Labrador (1833), and Missouri River (1843) journals.

*The Heart of Thoreau's Journals.* Edited by Odell Shepard. New York: Dover Publications, 1961. xii and 228 pages. Paper.

\$1.45. In Shepard's condensation the two million words that Thoreau entered in his journal between 1837 and 1861 are reduced to a little over 200 pages. The present edition is a revised version of the Houghton Mifflin Company's edition of 1927.

*The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion.* By Mircea Eliade; translated from the French by Willard R. Trask. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961. 256 pages. Paper. \$1.45. This paperback reissue—only two years after the publication of the Harcourt, Brace and Company hard cover English edition—makes an important work by the chairman of the University of Chicago's department of the history of religion available to the wider readership that this stimulating study deserves. Eliade, an Eastern Orthodox layman, states that his purpose in the four chapters of the work—on sacred space, sacred time, the sacredness of nature, and sanctified life—is, unlike that of Rudolf Otto, "to present the phenomenon of the sacred in all its complexity and not only in as far as it is irrational" (p. 10) and to "present the specific dimensions of religious experience, to bring out the difference between it and the profane experience of the world" (p. 17). In its commendable succinctness the analysis of the significance of myth, symbolism, and ritual within life and culture provided by this general introduction to the history of religion is a monument no less to the author's insight and scholarship than to his mastery of the materials of his discipline.

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